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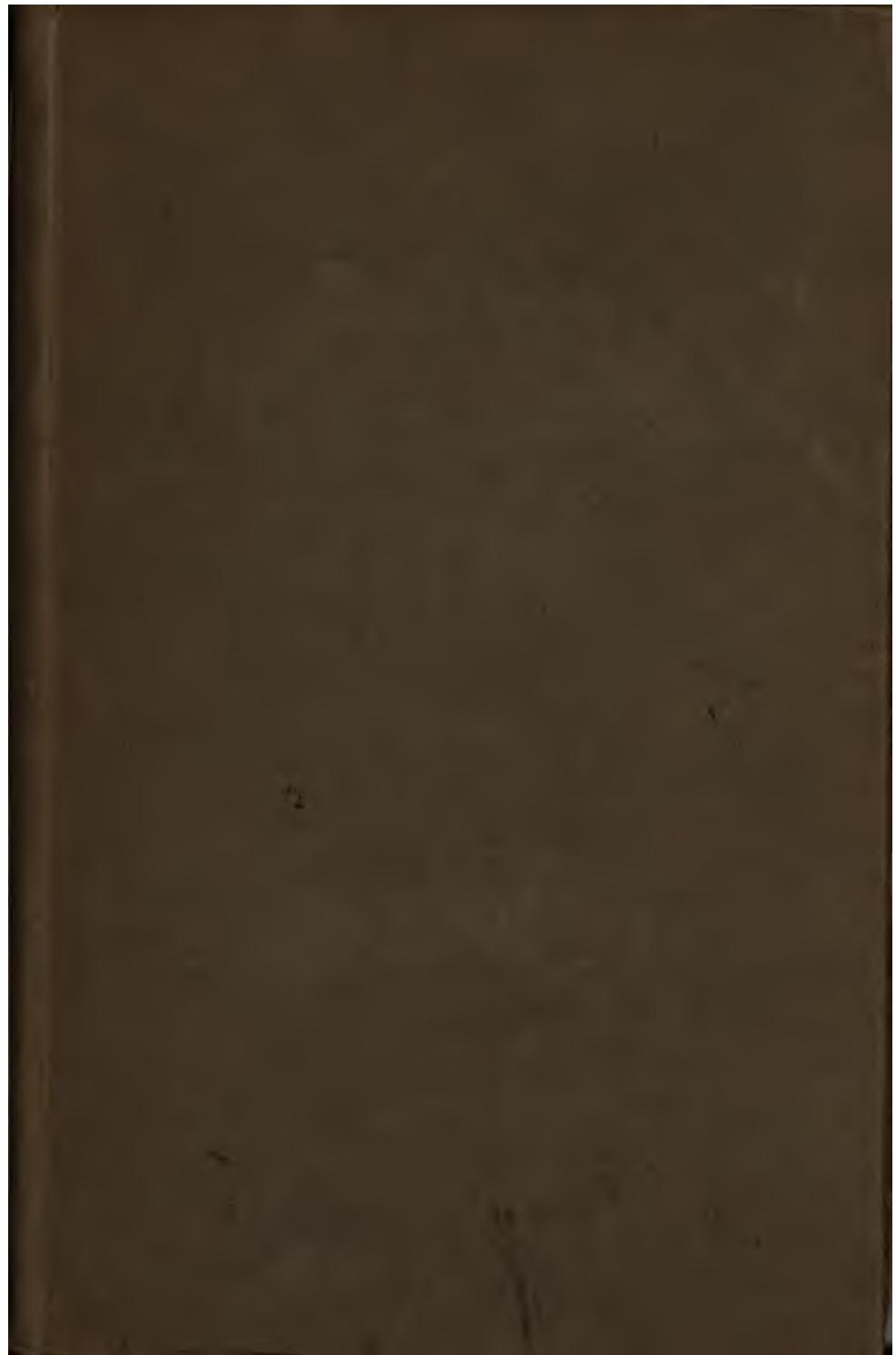
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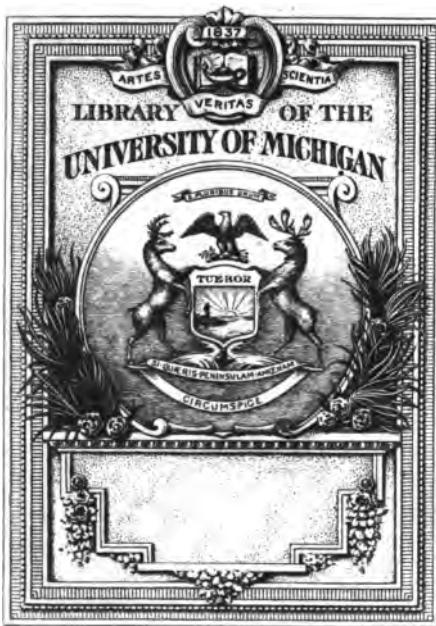
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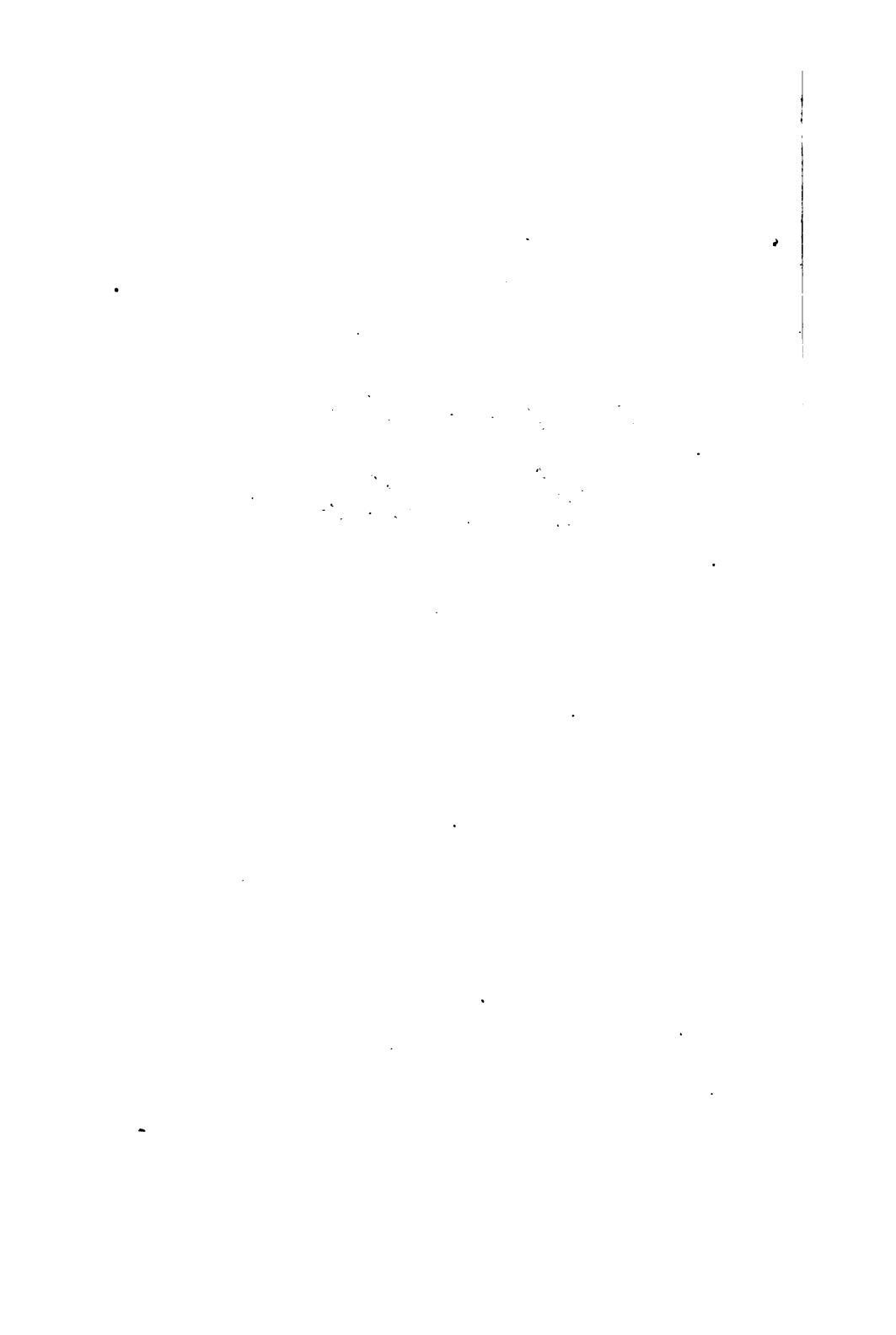
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vol. 2



THE
PERSIAN ADVENTURER:

In John Hope
^{BEING}
The Sequel
Patrick Slone

“THE KUZZILBASH;”

BY J. B. FRAZER, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF A TOUR TO THE HIMALÀ MOUNTAINS;
TRAVELS IN PERSIA, &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
PERSIAN ADVENTURER.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY.

THE few succeeding years of our hero's life, as given in the Memoirs from which we translate, offer little more than a somewhat tedious detail of the progressive steps by which his mighty master rose to the highest dignities of the empire, without affording much matter of a nature likely to interest the general reader. We shall therefore in this place assume the liberty which we proposed occasionally to take, and substitute for its more diffuse narration a slight outline of the events which conducted these important personages into the scenes about to be described.

No sooner had Nadir succeeded in expelling his formidable enemies the Affghauns from Ispahan, and finally from Persia, than he turned his attention to the encroachments of another ambitious neighbour, and resolved upon reuniting to the empire all those provinces and districts which had been wrested from it by the Turks in the days of its imbecility. Accordingly, early in the year 1729 he marched to Hamadan and Kermanshah,—drove the Turks across the Tigris, after many bloody actions, and retook the whole of the extensive districts of which these towns are the capitals.

Still more important was his next enterprise; the object of which was to recover the rich and populous province of Azerbijau; which, including its capital, Tabreez, had been occupied by the Osmanlees; and it would appear as if the terror of his arms had preceded and fought for him; for, after a struggle, by no means commensurate with the magnitude of his object, and in a time incredibly short, he recovered possession of the whole province by the beginning of August in the same year.

It was at this period that intelligence of the invasion of Khorasan, his favourite province, and more peculiar charge, by the Abdallee Affghauns, reached his ears, coupled with that of his brother Ibrahim's unfortunate defeat. Instantly abandon-

ing the projects he had conceived of pushing his conquests into Armenia, he quitted Azerbijau, and marched rapidly to Mushed. The success of his arms in that quarter, the capture of Herat and Furrah, with the arrangements into which he entered with the conquered Abdallees, have already been adverted to in our first volume.

In the mean time Shah Thahmaseb, anxious, if possible, to perform some exploit calculated to retrieve his character from the eclipse into which it had been thrown by the brighter fame of his general, resolved upon attempting to complete what Nadir had left undone ; and collecting a considerable force, marched against the fortress of Erivan. But the Turks, having recovered from the panic into which they had been thrown by the rapid progress of Nadir, rallied, opposed, and defeated the king; and forced him to ratify a treaty, which, after the late successes against that nation, was sufficiently disgraceful.

An indignity like this was neither likely to be digested nor forgiven by Nadir; and the measures he pursued for repelling the insult were characteristic of the vigour and decision of his mind. A manifesto, disclaiming all knowledge of, or adherence to, the unworthy treaty, and summoning the Turk to evacuate Azerbijau, or to prepare for war, was followed by immediate preparations for that extremity, upon his own part. In the month

of August, 1731, he entered Ispahan, where the shah resided ; and although their stormy interview was followed by an apparent reconciliation, and a friendly drinking bout of a full day and night's continuance, the almost immediate dethronement of the shah, and the coronation in his stead of his infant son Abbas, only eight months of age, sufficiently indicated the ambitious views of his general. It is true that the politic Nadir rejected for the time the call of the nobles and chiefs of his army to assume the diadem himself ; but there were few who could mistake the object of his apparent humility ; or who, if they had dared to speak, could have failed to predict the fate of the unfortunate pageant, who for the time was decorated with the symbols of royalty. The deposed monarch with his harem was sent into Khorasan, while the court of his infant son was appointed to be held at Casveen.

It was not till the beginning of the ensuing year that Nadir was sufficiently prepared for putting into execution his threats against the Turks, by entering their territory and investing Bagdad. But though he fought with his customary courage and daring, his usual good fortune appears on this occasion to have deserted him ; for, after a siege of considerable duration, the city was relieved by the advance of a large army under command of the Seraskier Topal Osman ; before which, after

much hard fighting, and great loss of men, he was forced to retire, and return to Hamadan. Nor were his arms more fortunate in Azerbijaun; for his lieutenant, Lootf Allee Beg, was driven from Tabrizee by Timour Pashah, and forced to take shelter in the mountainous district of Khalkhal.

But Nadir, although baffled for the time, was by no means disheartened. Recruiting his forces with incredible rapidity and success, in two months he was able to resume offensive operations ; and on the 26th of October once more encountered the army of Topal Osman at Leilam, near Keerkond, with better success ; for he defeated it with great slaughter; its brave general being slain in the action. This victory was followed by a treaty with Ahmed Pashah, of Bagdad, who pledged himself for the delivery to the Persian government of all the disputed provinces, including Azerbijaun, Ganjah, Sheerwan, and Teflis itself.

The court of Constantinople however refused to ratify the treaty which their officer had entered into, and Nadir resolved to be no longer their dupe, marched at once to Ardebeel, and succeeded in reducing not only the whole of Azerbijaun, but also Sheerwan, Karadaug, Daghestan, Erivan, and Teflis, with most part of the provinces of Armenia and Georgia.

It was after this rapid course of conquest, when the power of his arms had overborne all opposition,

and the terror of his name had silenced every voice but that of praise and adulation, that he threw off a mask which had become so irksome, and boldly seized upon the prize which had long been the aim of his ambitious projects. More than one circumstance contributed to render this juncture favourable to his views; for not only had he risen into high popularity by his splendid career of victory, but the infant king Abbas had just died, and Shah Thahmaseb, already held in contempt by the nation for his weak and effeminate character, and more particularly for his disgraceful treaty with an enemy who had subsequently been so signally defeated by their favourite commander, lived neglected, and almost forgotten, in a remote retreat. The race of the Soffees was virtually extinct; their long glories had passed away, or were dimmed by the fresher lustre of that luminary which had dazzled the eyes of Persia, and fixed the gaze of the whole eastern world. The throne was vacant, and there was no legitimate aspirant to the diadem; who then could be so fit to uphold its majesty, and enjoy its honors; as the man who had snatched it from the disgrace of foreign usurpation, and washed it from the stains it had contracted in the blood of its insolent aggressors? But an account of this event, so important to Persia, will best be given in the words of our hero, who was himself an eye-witness of its pomps.

CHAPTER II.

THE PLAINS OF CHOWUL MOGHAUM.

The subjection of the turbulent Lezghes of Daghestan having been thus completed, (says the Kuzzilbesh,) and the tranquillity of the empire secured, his highness conceived that a fitting period had at length arrived for making certain national arrangements of high importance; and particularly for determining by an appeal to the assembled chiefs of Irain, the momentous question of succession to a throne, now vacant once more by the death of the infant Abbâs. Accordingly mandates were issued to all governors of provinces or cities, and to every khian, noble, or chief, of authority throughout the kingdom, to repair forthwith to the plains of *Chowul Moghaum*, where they should bask in the sunshine of the august presence, and quaff streams of happiness and prosperity from the fountains of auspicious favor.

The plains of Moghaum, which stretch almost from the walls of Andebeel, and along the banks

of the united streams of the Arras and Kour, to the gulf of Salian, upon the Caspian sea, are of immense extent, and abounding in wood and water, and every other requisite for the convenience of an extensive encampment, were admirably calculated for displaying the imposing spectacle of which they were destined to be the theatre. Nor did the magnificent spirit of Nadir fail to make preparations suitable to the solemnity he meditated. Thousands of labourers and artisans were despatched from various quarters, for the purpose of erecting near the confluence of the two majestic rivers a number of superb edifices of various forms and descriptions, to accommodate the multitude of chiefs and nobles who were expected at the rendezvous. Serais, eywans, and palaces of every sort, with all their establishments of courts and apartments, both public and private,—receptacious baths, extensive bazaars, with long rows of handsome shops,—spacious caravanserais, and lofty mosques, arose from the plain like morning exhalations, all formed of the materials afforded by the spot itself, and called into form and beauty by the will of the mighty conqueror, who was presently to honour them with his presence. The month of January was far advanced before the banners of his highness floated over these vast plains ; and duty detained me from the presence during some weeks longer, while chief after chief, and khan after khan, arrived to

swell with their retinues the gathering crowd ; until the whole interminable expanse seemed teeming with life and motion.

It was on a mild February morning that, descending from the heights above Bait, upon my way from Ganja, my eyes first caught a glimpse of this immense, but still distant encampment. Innumerable little columns of smoke rose whitening in the oblique rays of the rising sun from every quarter of the plain, and mingled with the dense sheet of vapour which floated above it in the calm unruffled air of the early hour. The mass beneath, too distant yet to be distinctly visible, presented to the eye only a confused assemblage of dark and scarcely discernible objects, mingled with many specks of lighter hue, and points of sparkling brilliancy ; while the obscure indications of motion, which alone betokened these objects to be instinct with life, suggested no definite idea of their character or properties.

As I continued my course towards the bridge of Jeowad, at the junction of the two rivers, the sun ascending rapidly in the heavens, illuminated every object, and indicated more distinctly the vicinity of a mighty multitude. The ground over which I travelled, it is true, was of too level a character to afford many opportunities of reconnoitring to a great distance ; but from every little eminence over which the path led me a moving mass might

now be distinguished ;—a mighty stir, as if the dust of the earth itself had started into life and action ;—a very swarming hive of living beings.

There was upon the southern side of the bridge an elevated mound, which I ascended in order to view the scene before me to more advantage. But what terms can convey a fit idea of that busy and various spectacle ? . Far as the eye could reach the plain, which seemed to stretch immeasurably beyond the range of vision, was covered with living things, thronging among their various temporary habitations : and then, such plains !—green and lovely to the eye, fertile in every natural production ; the herbage rich even to rankness, and varied with magnificent wood, in coppice, grove, and forest, was watered by a thousand meandering streams, the reedy courses of which had worn their way deep into the fat soil. Of these noble woods whole districts had been laid low, and hundreds of acres had been cleared of their reeds, to furnish materials for this prodigious encampment, or rather temporary city, which in commodiousness, splendour, and magnificence of designs, was well calculated to exalt the munificence of its noble projector. The long bazars might be seen extending in regular lines, and crossing each other in angular directions. The dwellings, too, of the khans and military chiefs, could be discerned, each surmounted by its owner's distinguishing ensigns ; and where

the glittering cullices and gilded pinacles mustered thickest on the roofs and awnings, the eye was arrested by the august banners of the mighty chief himself; which rising high above the rest, floated heavily upon the freshening breeze of noon.

Fired with impatience at the sight; I spurred down the little hillock; and was making such haste to join the busy scene as the tired horses of my party could achieve; when, better mounted, and therefore making quicker progress, Shah Verdee Beg, an officer of some consideration in the camp, attended by a considerable escort, overtook me on his way to head-quarters.

"Salaam aleicoum! may the meeting be happy, khan! From whence does your worship come?" "Aleicoum salaam! prosperity to your house, my friend!" replied I, "from Ganjah, near which place I was stationed to watch that vicious old wolf Boork Allee Beg of Karabaugh. But what are the news?—what is going on here?—what is yon huge assembly about?"—"Why, what should they be about?" returned Shah Verdee: "the chiefs and nobles are intriguing and lying; and the rest are filling their bellies at any one's expense but their own, and paying for the same with flattery."—"Well," replied I, "I might have guessed as much without your aid, comrade; but of what nature are the present intrigues, and who

are the principal actors in them?—how does the general bear himself? and has the object of this national meeting been declared?”—But in place of repeating the long conversation which ensued between Shah Verdee and myself, I will shortly state the facts which I became acquainted with in the course of it;—facts which I had partly learned already from the tongue of rumour, and part of which my own observations had given me some cause to suspect; although the uneasiness which every thing unfavourable to the character of my noble patron excited in my mind prevented me from admitting such suspicions even to myself.

Nadir having subjugated or repelled the enemies of Persia, became naturally anxious to secure the benefits he had thus bestowed, by establishing the government in hands capable of maintaining the integrity and prosperity of the country. His enviers and calumniators interpreted this anxiety into a desire of placing upon his own head the crown which he had saved; and if in truth, from devoting his whole energies so long and zealously to one object, he came at length to identify the welfare and glory of Persia with his personal influence and power,—when he saw too the line of the late reigning family virtually extinct, or that to invest its feeble survivors with possession of the supreme power was clearly incompatible with the prosperity of the country, who shall blame him if

he arrived at the conclusion, that the dignity and existence of that country could alone be secure in the custody of his own person ; and if under that conviction he resolved to effect so expedient a measure in the most popular manner that could be devised ?

It was for the purpose of choosing a sovereign that he had summoned the national assembly at Chowul Moghaum ; but how far he had come to the resolution of asserting his right to the supreme dignity, or even of accepting it if pressed upon him by the voice of the people, was scarcely known to an individual beyond himself, if even he had come to a positive conclusion on the subject. That the army and majority of the nation desired his elevation, is certain ; but that he had enemies, and those powerful ones, especially among the priesthood, is equally sure. The sequel, while it shows how he triumphed over these enemies, may also perhaps serve to throw light upon the motives by which he was actuated throughout the whole of this remarkable transaction.

While Shaverdea was thus instructing me, we insensibly approached the encampment, the vicinity of which was every moment more strongly indicated. The path we followed became larger and at every step more intersected by other tracks, and more deeply trampled by the feet of men and cattle. The deep soil, moistened by the early

rains of spring, had become so poached into ridges of heights and hollows of mud, that our horses sunk up to the girths at every step." Grass, reeds, and brushwood were trodden down and destroyed; the marks of grazing animals were every where to be seen, until at length the whole face of the ground was reduced to a bare, muddy, trampled surface : the trees, which had grown upon it for the most part were cut down, such portion as was wanted being used in the temporary erection of the camp ; the more unwieldy logs being left to rot where they lay ; and the rest, mutilated and disfigured, were left to a more gradual decay.

Advancing still further, we came within the extended circle of outposts and sentries, who stopping us, required our names and business, and reported forthwith to head-quarters. Stragglers now became more frequent: groupes and individuals on their own affairs, and small parties on duty, constantly crossed our path. The hum of the multitude rose higher as we approached its temporary abode ; and an indefinable sensation, analogous to that which in sleep or in darkness gives warning of the approach of others, made us aware that we were already in the close vicinity of a mighty throng. But soon that throng was not only to be heard, but seen ; for we entered one of the main avenues, where thousands of people were passing and repassing ; some with the speedy pace

of urgent business; others with the leitiring step of listless curiosity: while ever and anon a horseman would gallop along at speed, dashing to either side the idle crowd, regardless of anghit but the importance of his own message; or a chief or a noble, attended by his followers, and preceded by furoahsa with clubs, would force his way through the wavering multitude, proceeding doubtless upon some equally momentous demand. Great flocks of sheep and cattle were driven towards the pens or the slaughtering-shops in one quarter; while in another the whole street was encumbered by trains of loaded mules and camels bearing stores for the army, or the baggage of those who were every moment arriving in camp.

Passing rapidly through this scene of confusion towards the palace of the general, I reported my arrival; but being informed that he was occupied with very urgent business, I would not intrude, but made the best of my way to the quarters assigned me, where my servants had already pitched my tents. Evening was fast drawing on, when after refreshing myself with the bath, and a few hours' repose after the fatigue of my toilsome journey, I quitted my tent and went abroad to look about me and gather the news of the hour; nor had I proceeded far into the more frequented quarters of the encampment, when it became evident that a powerful degree of anxiety was agitating its inha-

bitants. The bazars were crowded with eager countenances ; in every shop there was a group of people, whose earnest air as each leant forward in his seat to catch the low whisper of the speakers, betrayed their deep interest in the subject of discussion. The streets and avenues of the camp were filled with crowds hurrying along with looks bent upon the earth, or sometimes stopping to converse for a few moments, and then each resuming his course with increased rapidity. The symptoms of a general though suppressed bustle grew every moment stronger, and sufficiently declared the universal belief that an important crisis was at hand, as well as the intense interest which was felt for the issue.

The result of my inquiries was but little satisfactory ; and towards the hour of evening prayers I repaired once more to the dur-khaneh in hope not only of seeing the general, but of acquiring some more correct information regarding the reports which were now almost universally though cautiously circulated respecting the designs of his highness. My mortification therefore was not less than my surprise at learning, not only that I could not be admitted at the time, but that his highness was still closeted with certain of the principal chiefs and men of the law, and that he would not be disengaged until within two hours of midnight, at which hour he had given orders for cer-

tain confidential officers of his army, myself among the number, to attend his pleasure.

Restless and unsettled, without well knowing why, I quitted the palace-gate and strolled onwards, until insensibly I got entangled in the mass of temporary structures assigned for the accommodation of his highness's numerous guests. The quarters appropriated to governors of cities and of provinces, and to chiefs of powerful tribes, were among these ; and here too were entertained the men of learning, of law, and of religion ; the meerzas, the moollahs, and the saints of the land. Among these last, it appeared the approaching crisis was a subject of not less eager interest and keen discussion than among their brethren of the laity. In passing along by the apartments of these reverend persons I could hear their earnest voices, and now and then catch a sentence that betrayed the subject which engrossed them.

The vehemence of one speaker in particular so powerfully arrested my attention, that I stopt to hear what he said ; and the first sentences were of such a nature as induced me to ensoonce myself near the opening of the apartment, in order to make myself acquainted with the sentiments of those who occupied it.

" No, no !—I tell you no !" exclaimed voice the first, maintaining its elevated key : " the thing is impossible—it cannot be !—He dares not

attempt it."—"Well, we shall see, for I say he will attempt it," replied another in a more subdued tone; "and more than that, the thing will be done unless the moollah-bashiee and Maerza Moy-a-den, with Moollah Abou-Seloom, make more vigorous and instant efforts, and secure a powerful party against the measure."—"And so they will, my friend—they will do so;—they are not the men to shrink or lag in the cause of our most venerable faith. ... Holy Alleluia! couldst thou permit thy name to be thus insulted! thy power to be thus defied! Oh! thrice blessed Prophet! shall thy ordinances thus be set at nought?—May the tombs of their fathers be polluted who think of it!—May the best ease and comfort of their own souls be in the hottest flames of hell!"

"Hush, hush; brother! less violence and more prudence. These walls are not of a texture to baffle a listener; and more ears than yours or mine may hear our counsel: be patient, and I will tell you facts. That he will press the measure is undoubted; but if he shall see that it is likely to expose him to the national disgust, he will not dare to persevere; and who but we possess the true key to the national faith and feeling? Our opposition must be respectful, but firm. To chafe him into wrath might undo us; we must try to soothe him into acquiescence."

"Curses on his head!—Soothe him!—beard

him rather, and denounce the wrath of Allah on his soul!—What think you would the upstart Toork dare to attack the faith in the face of all its ministers, and before the assembled chiefs and nobles who profess it?"—"Dare?—ay, more than this will he dare; and woe be to them who oppose his will!—Listen and tremble; for I speak from knowledge: not religion alone is in danger: the large revenues of the priesthood, the bequests of munificent sovereigns and pious nobles to all the shrines and dargahs throughout Iran are in more than equal jeopardy. The revenues of the state are unequal to supply the treasures which Nadir has lavished, and must still expend in his struggles for power, and for that glory which dazzles the people's eyes. He is grasping in proportion to his necessities; and think you that to a rapacious chief like Nadir the obvious expedient of appropriating the hoarded wealth of the shrines and their ministers should not have suggested itself? Nadir has no religion, although for selfish purposes he may assume its mask: self-interest is his only god, and to that would he sacrifice every object human or divine."

" You are right—I see it:—it is clear—all clear: and can you wonder at my indignation?—But I will be prudent and suppress it: I see we must dissemble. As for my friend the mullah-bashee, be assured that his zeal is firm; that he

values his life only as a means of preserving uncontaminated the true Sheah faith. His absences at this critical time is unlucky, but his zeal alone is the cause of it; for he is indefatigably employed in stirring up the mass of the priesthood and religionists to forward our views; and they again have been secretly and silently alarming the soldiery, and exhorting them to support their faith at the expense even of their lives. At this moment he is at Ardebeel, where at the tomb of Sheikh Seffee and Shah Ismael the Great, he is recruiting many zealous pilgrims and religious mendicants as fit instruments for our cause."

"Good!—I know it; but the reverend moollah will do well to be cautious if he would not ruin instead of aiding his own work: to gain a majority in the army were to gain our end; but to fail and be baffled were destruction. Let a single hint of such intrigues get wind, and to the devil go the moollah and the cause; nay, the appearance of intrigue would prejudice even the truth itself: let us then be vigilant and active;—let us watch the reverend moollah's arrival, and take counsel with him regarding our safest and most effectual course."

Here the conversation was either interrupted or broken up; the speakers left the place, and I my concealment, musing on all I had heard, and resolved to communicate its amount to my master

so soon as an opportunity of doing so should present itself.

The fourth hour of the night had been announced from the Nowbut-khaneh* before I took my way to the general's quarters, where I found some of the principal officers of the army assembled. Thahmaseb Khan Wukeel, Lootf Allee Khan, and Cossim Beg Khan, an officer who of late had risen high in the favour of his highness, were engaged in earnest conversation when I arrived; but the almost immediate entrance of our master himself put an end to all discussions; and after the usual salutations we took our places according to custom.

It would be indiscreet to relate in this place the communications which his highness thought fit to make in confidence to his faithful servants: it is sufficient to state, that he took occasion to make us so far acquainted with his views as consisted with his prudence and pleasure; and that the reasons he gave for all he had done, and all he intended to do, were so cogent, as not only to satisfy our minds with regard to his motives, but to increase, if it were possible, our zealous enthusiasm in his service.

When the conference was terminated, and we

* The band which plays at regular intervals at the gates of sovereigns and chiefs.

were about to retire, I solicited a few minutes' interview with his highness in private, on the plea of reporting more particularly the result of my services in Karabaugh; but in reality, for the purpose of communicating the conversation I had overheard in the quarter of the moollahs. "Ay!" replied Nadir, when he had heard me to an end, "are the dull asses so bold? I know their stubborn besotted folly, and they shall soon know me; but I suspected not that it had risen to such a height. I thank thee, Ismael, for thy news. I owe thee too some explanation touching the matter thou hast heard. The yaboos,* it seems, have wit enough to forebode a coming blow, though they be too dull to avoid it." And accordingly his highness was pleased to enter condescendingly with his servant into a further explanation of his opinions, as they affected the united political and religious arrangements of the state. Of these matters I deem it unbecoming for me to speak, even at this late period. Whatever alarm might be taken by my own religious feelings, or however I might be disposed to pause in assenting to some of the opinions and deductions of his highness, such was my confidence in his superior wisdom and experience, as well as in his patriotic views,

* Pack-horses, equivalent to our expression "jack-ass," in contempt.

that I could not bring myself to oppose any part of them; and I left the presence with a pledge which was echoed from my very heart, to lavish my best blood in support of my noble patron's designs, whatever these might be. In truth, although, praise be to God! a good Mussulman and a sincere Sheah according to the faith of my fore-fathers, I have never been much disposed to interfere in religious disputes, conceiving such things best understood by priests and moollahs, who are paid for making themselves masters of the subject; and if his highness should find means to persuade these holy persons of the necessity of a change, it became not me to interfere.

Scarcely had the hour of morning prayer been announced from the tops of the mosques, and a short space of time been allowed for the performance of religious duties, when the drums sounded, the troops got under arms in the order of their several corps, and the multitude began to assemble in an immense semicircle, cleared for the purpose, on one side of the camp, and opposite to a semianeh or pavilion of immense size, which was surrounded with serpurdehs or screens of canvass. The troops then filing under the commands of their officers, formed a dense and spacious square, which admitted only those privileged persons to whom the communications of his highness were to be specially addressed.

Chiefs and nobles now came pouring through the various accesses, in continued streams, until ranged by the dewanbeggee and his attendant *yessawuls*, according to their respective stations and grades of office, they filled the vast living inclosure, to the number, as it was said, of six thousand persons. A more striking and more brilliant sight could not have been imagined than that august assemblage of all that Iraun could send forth of wise, and brave, and noble, richly arrayed in their robes of ceremony, and seated in profound anxiety to hear their own and their country's destinies pronounced by the lips of one whose will was fate, whose eye was as the lightning-flash which glances from one quarter of heaven to the other, and whose arm, like that of the destroying angel, was not to be withheld.

A low murmuring sound, as the distant rush of waters, rose from their thronged ranks for a while, and was echoed in louder accents from the countless multitude beyond the pale; but the trumpets sounded again, the music of the nokarakhaneh struck up, and every other sound was hushed into intense silence, while the front range of serpurdehs was withdrawn as by the waft of a wand, and the person of his highness appeared between a triple row of his principal officers, which extended from the front of the semianeh to the point where the serpurdehs had stood.

Immediately and simultaneously every man within the circle arose to his feet, and, bowing with profound respect, uttered in a loud voice the fitting compliments, mingled with prayers, for the health and prosperity of the deliverer of Iraun ; of the conqueror, the destroyer of her foes. The troops saluted their beloved leader ; and the multitude beyond them rent the air with repeated and deafening acclamations.

The sound yet dwelt upon the ear when, at a signal given, a splendid charger, armed and accoutred as for battle, was led to the front of the pavilion, its brilliant harness forming a strong contrast to the plain unpretending apparel of its master, who, clad in the same garb and arms which he wore in the day of battle, now rose, and mounting the noble animal, while the artillery thundered in salute and his officers clustered around him, moved slowly forward to the front of the assembly ; his attendants then ranged themselves on either side, while a small party of picked gholaums, in brilliant armour, spread somewhat beyond them as guards of his person. Nadir halted ; and in the clear distinct impressive voice with which nature had so peculiarly gifted him, and which sent his words, like the thunders of the Almighty, to the uttermost parts of the assembly, spoke as follows :—

“ Nobles and chiefs of Iraun, and you reverend

moollahs, and learned meerzas, ye are welcome to the camp of Nadir Koolee. To you it is that he seeks to render an account of his stewardship for the years during which he has led the victorious armies of the state against her foes: for this purpose it is that he has this day summoned you to meet him.

“Who is there among you that can have forgotten the wretched condition of the Persian empire during the latter years of the pious Shah Hoosein?—may peace be to his soul! Encroached upon on one side by the Turks; on another by the khan of Russia; the rest of the kingdom overrun and for the time subdued by the fierce and barbarous Abdallees; with an effeminate monarch, a corrupt court, and an exhausted treasury; its capital destroyed, its nobles massacred, and its soil drenched in the blood of its ryots, the fair land of Iraun must soon have fallen irretrievably the prey of strangers and tyrants,—a victim to the supine weakness, the guilty folly of its rulers.

“Thus situated was the land when, by the will of the Most High, the humble slave who now addresses you was made the instrument of his almighty power. In spite of his inadequate means, and the infatuated opposition of the dethroned monarch, undismayed by the number and the power of his own enemies and those of the state combined, he

opposed, repelled, and conquered them by turns. Of the savage and insolent Affghauns who slaughtered our fathers and our brothers, and who dragged our women to slavery and dishonour, scarce one escaped to tell the story of their defeat and punishment. Khorasan is tranquil; Herât and Furrah are once more our own. The Osmanlees who boasted that they would retain Hamadan and Kermanshah, who appointed their pashas to rule in Tabreez, and plundered the shrines of Arde-beel, they have abandoned their usurped possessions; their best troops have fallen along with their noblest general, and even Bagdad itself has been glad to purchase immunity by a favourable treaty of peace. Erivan is ours, with more than half Armenia. Gheelan and Sheerwan, with Teflis itself, have been ceded voluntarily by the khan of Muscovy; while Daghestan and its lesghees, with many of the wildest tribes of Caucasus, have been forced to desist from their lives of plunder, and reluctantly to yield to our sway.

“ Such then as I have described it did I find the empire;—such as ye see it now do I restore it to the hands of its nobles. Peace reigns on all sides: there remains but to maintain it, and the means are in your hands. Shah Thahmaseb and Shah Abbas were your rightful sovereigns; and spite of the Affghau knives, there remain still some princes of the royal line, of the blood

of the Seffees. Choose from among these a monarch fit to reign over you, virtuous, noble-minded, and qualified to maintain the glory and prosperity of Iraun; or if among the royal line there be none worthy of such a trust, then look around among yourselves—among the nobles of high influence and virtue—among the chiefs of ancient and of powerful tribes, and select the man who will deal equal justice through the land; and restore to it the tranquillity and peace of the age of Nousheerwan, with the glory and magnificence of the Abbases.

“ As for me, my end has been accomplished. I have done my duty, and have reaped my reward. If I have watched and fought for the state, it is enough for me to know, that by the favour of the Almighty, and by the conquering scimitars of our brave and trusty soldiers, I have been the means of driving the Affghaun and the Turkoman, the Turk and the Russian, from the fair plains of Iraun. My destiny has been fulfilled ; and now I will retire to my own province, and end my days in tranquillity and peace among the scenes of my infancy. This is the purpose for which ye have been called together. My duty is discharged ;—yours remains to be done. Retire and deliberate : let your decision be made, upon mature consideration ; and in three days return hither to inform me of the result.”

Having said these words, he saluted the as-

sembly, with an air of mingled courtesy and loftiness, and turned to withdraw; but he was stopped by the thunder of many voices, exclaiming tumultuously, "No Thahmaseb!—no Abbas!—no Seffee! Let Nadir be our king!—we will have only Nadir, the conqueror of the Affghauns, the preserver of the state. May his shadow increase! The centre of the universe,—the protector of the poor! Let him be our king!" In the midst of this turbulent display of loyal feeling, which doubtless was nothing displeasing to the soul of his highness, a number of the nobles, headed by Hadjee Mahomed Maasoum, the venerable governor of Sheerauz, stepped forth, and advancing in front of his highness, fell with their foreheads to the earth.

"My lord," said the hadjee, as rising from his suppliant attitude, he kissed the hem of his highness's cloak, "let the lowest of your slaves be permitted to make known to your exalted highness the earnest petition of the Persian people. "Who," say they, "is worthy of the crown but he who snatched it from the grasp of a foreign invader, and avenged its insulted dignity?—who is so able to maintain the integrity of the empire as he who wrested its dismembered provinces from the robbers who had seized on them, and reunited them in fresh vigour to the parent stock? The glory of the Seffees has passed away:—it will revive in the

person of your highness. Their strength was withered like the summer herbage, and they could no longer hold the sceptre. The hand of your highness caught it as it fell, and the might of your arm will sustain it in splendour and in honour. Deign then, my lord, to assume that crown which Heaven has offered to your hand, and become the father and protector of the people whom you have already preserved from destruction."

The glow which flushed the swarthy cheek of Nadir at this address was only visible to those immediately around him ; his eye was tranquil, and his voice composed, while he replied to it,

" That the wishes you have expressed are flattering to my feelings, I will not deny; but I cannot comply with them. My desires have been centred in the welfare of the state and the prosperity of the people : that of wearing the crown never entered my heart ; nor am I prepared to make the sacrifice which such a burden would involve. At present, be pleased to retire ; consult, -- deliberate ; prepare your decision, and in three days present it to me here. Till then ye are my guests ; and my officers have directions to see that your entertainment be such as beseems your dignity and my liberality. May the All-wise direct your counsels, and protect you till we meet again ! " With these words, and in spite of the continued acclamations of the whole assembly, he

turned and rode back to the pavilion, accompanied by his officers. The serpurdehs closed upon them, and shut him out from the view of the admiring assembly.

For three days after this event the camp became a scene of festivity and amusement of every description. The stores of provision which had been drawn from various accumulated magazines were lavished with unsparring liberality. Gheelan and Mazunderan were drained of their rice; the mountains of Talish and Karabaugh were stript of their flocks; the rivers which flow into the Kulzoom,* and even the sea itself, seemed to be exhausted of their fish to supply dainty food for the noble guests. Even their meanest followers were feasted luxuriously. Fars, Georgia, and Armenia, were taxed to furnish their racy wines and intoxicating spirits; and the richest fruits poured in from all the fertile provinces around.

But throughout all this revelry and profusion the eyes of his highness and of his confidential servants never slumbered nor closed. With unwearyed vigilance they watched the intrigues which his enemies, dispersing themselves throughout the camp, carried on with less adroitness than perseverance. The moollah-bashee, a well-meaning but enthusiastic and intemperate man, had arrived in camp with a host of furious zealots from

* Caspian sea.

the tombs of Skeikh Seffee and Shah Ismael, who strove to awaken in the chiefs of the country and the soldiery an alarm on the score of religion, which they asserted to be in danger from the intended measures of the general. With some, particularly among the nobles, they doubtless did not labour in vain; but the soldiers, for the most part devoted to their great leader, and little concerned about nice distinctions of creed, were rather disposed to laugh at than to listen to the insinuations of these saintly alarmists; and admonished by their officers, who hinted at prospects of future largess and plunder, treated them with an insulting contempt, which drove them to more willing proselytes. No whit of these manœuvres was concealed from the piercing eye of Nadir. He marked them all, and took his measures accordingly.

On the morning of the third day the chiefs and nobles assembled again in the same place, and with the same ceremonies as before; when a députation from among them, headed as formerly by Hadjee Mahomed Maasoum, came forward with a solemn written address; the purport of which was to confirm by the result of their deliberate opinions the sentiments they had formerly delivered; and to repeat their earnest solicitations that the leader who had saved should wear the crown so worthily earned. The reply to this representation was a reiterated assurance that the crown was by no

means an object of his highness's ambition : that he had only assumed the temporary rank, from which he was now desirous to withdraw, for the sake of his country : that its enemies being chastised, and its prosperity restored, he was anxious to restore the power he held into the hands of such legitimate sovereign as the deputies of the people might select, and to retire into the privacy he loved, there to remain, unless called upon once more by duty, to support the throne, or avenge its insulted dignity. He therefore besought the deputies to revise their decision, and leave him to the obscurity he courted.

Such was the nature of this extraordinary discussion, which continued for many days. The chiefs and nobles persevered in pressing upon his highness a diadem, which he, on his part, appeared resolute to reject ; while the intrigues of his enemies, and the counteracting efforts of his friends, or rather those of the state, proceeded during the whole time with unabated zeal.

The crisis, however, drew near. The importunity of the deputies increased, and the clamour of the mob grew more deafening, until at length his highness became convinced, that to save the kingdom from a state of confusion and anarchy, it was necessary to comply with their reiterated and urgent entreaties. " It is well," said he ; I have done my duty.—Ye have had ample time for deli-

beration, and no argument has been left untried by me to induce you to choose another and a fitter sovereign; but ye have made your decision. The time has now come when ye must know mine.—Repair hither at this same hour *to-morrow*, and *ye shall hear it.*"

CHAPTER III.

A CORONATION.

THAT morrow, so eventful, so important in the history of Iraun, came at length. An aspect of profounder interest reigned in the assembly; and even the countless multitude beyond the forbidden pale stretched forth their necks with an intenser curiosity. Every eye was turned with eager expectation to the pavilion, from whence the momentous declaration was so soon to emanate.

In due time the serpurdehs opened, and the mighty chief came forth, clad in the simple garb and plain armour which it was his choice to wear; his countenance marked by the same grave and tranquil grandeur which belonged to its happiest mood, as he advanced, and addressed the assembled nobles.

“ Men of Iraun!—The purposes for which ye have been summoned here are well known to ye

all ; nor need I now refer to the important discussions and the weighty arguments which have occupied the time and attention of this assembly for so many days. The throne of this kingdom is vacant: ye have met to choose a king ; and in spite of all that has been urged by me against it, ye have chosen the man who now addresses you ; who has led, it is true, the armies of the state to victory, but who is still the meanest of her servants. Now hear his fixed resolve :

“ Ye have seen that by the favour of the Most High the soldiers of Iraun have triumphed over her enemies, and that the cup of her glory and prosperity are almost full. And ye know, for I have told you, that in witnessing the success of my efforts, my reward was complete. That further I sought but to retire unmolested, and end my days in obscure tranquillity. This ye have not permitted. Ye have solemnly called upon me to fill the throne, which ye confess to have been preserved by my efforts ; to wear that diadem, which but for me, would have adorned the brow of a tyrant, red with the blood of your fathers. The voice of the people, like that of the Almighty, may not be resisted.—I grant your request : I accept this diadem, which ye force upon my head, rather than that you should be oppressed or it dishonoured. I consent to the sacrifice— for such it is to me—of ease and security, for the cares of

state, for the responsibility which attaches to the father of an empire and its children. But know that I consent to all this conditionally only. To certain fixed conditions ye must all subscribe, or our contract is at an end. Give ear therefore, and ponder well these terms: deliberate upon them ere you give me your reply.

" In the first place, I will accept of no ephemeral or transient sovereignty. The crown you thus force upon me must be mine in perpetuity: it must descend to my children. My family have claims on my exertions; if these be devoted to your benefit and that of the empire, it is but just that they should share my reward while suffering under the deprivations it occasions. To confirm this resolution, I require your solemn promise upon oath, that no one, upon pain of death and forfeiture of property and family, shall ever, directly or indirectly, countenance any member of the late royal family, or prove in any shape or degree rebellious to my authority.

" In the second place, I declare it to be my firm opinion that the misfortunes of Persia have had their principal origin in the unfortunate schismatic difference which exists between the faith which it professes, and that of the neighbouring Mahometan nations; a difference which, by separating her in religious feeling from those who should be her natural allies, tends to surround her with a host of

enemies. Now, as these differences consist chiefly in unimportant points of doctrine, which bear but little, if at all, upon the fundamental tenets of our holy faith, it is, and I declare that it shall be, a principal condition of my accepting the crown, that the nation shall abjure the errors of the Sheah heresy—a heresy which has been the cause of so much mischief; shall cease to curse *Omar*, *Othman* and *Abubekr*; or to hold these tumultuous meetings which disgrace the solemnity of the mohurrum, at the anniversary of the death of the sons of Allee. This baneful and pernicious schism, taking its rise with the founder of the late dynasty, was fostered and confirmed by the mighty Ismael: a proof how imperfect may be the judgment of the bravest and wisest of men; nor could the prudence and generosity of Thahmaseb, nor the vigorous sway and brilliant achievements of Abbas, prevent it from brooding over the land like an ominous cloud, to burst in a storm of bloodshed and desolation on the first weak reign which should succeed. It is fit, therefore, both as a measure expedient in itself, and of vital importance to the empire, that its inhabitants should henceforth abjure their errors, and return to the legitimate and sacred paths of Islam; from which they have so long and so unhappily wandered.

“Finally, be it known to you that, if you decide on submitting to my authority, your toils and your

glories are but in their commencement. If fate has written upon this brow a long term of existence, and if Allah shall continue to strengthen my arm, and direct my counsels, as hitherto he has deigned to do, the name of Iraun shall yet boast of a splendor surpassing that of her most brilliant eras, and her prosperity and happiness shall equal her fame: but glory, like peace and happiness, can only be purchased by danger, and toil, and many sacrifices. My soldiers know me well; and they know that they suffer no toil, no privation, in which their leader does not share. But my armies must be maintained; and the nation at large must contribute liberally to the support of those who fight its battles and drive the enemy from its gates. Such is my resolution, and such are my terms. Nadir stoops not to concealment or deceit: ye now know them fully. Retire, consult, revolve them well, and in three days meet me once more in this place with your final reply."

Such was his highness's address. At the close of each sentence the air rung with shouts. When he announced his acceptance of the throne the applause was overwhelming; nor did it diminish when his first conditions were declared: but when he introduced his bold proposal of changing the religion of a nation at a single blow, the applause became mingled with murmurs of disapprobation, and the whole assembly was agitated as by a

powerful emotion. To the closing part of his speech the soldiers and their officers replied with a thundering burst of enthusiasm ; but when all was over, and Nadir, who had scanned the assembly with a calm but keen eye, was turning to retire, a movement became observable in the quarter where the priests and men of the law were standing, and at length the moollah-bashee, attended by three or four principal persons of his own profession, advanced from among the rest towards his highness.

" May it please your highness," said the moollah, with a profound obeisance, " the august lips are as a well of delight, and the words which have issued from them, like the waters of Zemzem, have filled the hearts of your servants with joy. But alas ! what earthly good is perfect ! That joy is not unmixed with alarm. To become the subjects of a monarch powerful as your highness, whose arm like that of the Almighty will overshadow and protect them from harm, is a blessing they daily pray for. But my lord will assuredly feel that his sway can extend but to temporal concerns, and with these he will doubtless rest content. The law of God himself, and the traditions of his holy Prophet (on whom and on his family be the blessing of the Most High !) are our guides in all that pertains to religion ; and to these, through the help of the Omnipotent, we shall adhere, as

we trust, unmolested, whoever be our king or governor: nor would it be an auspicious commencement for the reign of any prince to open it with an act subversive of the religion of his people. Let such thoughts then be far from your highness:— in other respects we shall remain your faithful and obedient subjects."

An hundred mouths were opened, as the moollah concluded, to confirm his words; but a glance at the countenance of Nadir suspended the half-uttered sounds; and they stood still, gaping in motionless confusion and alarm. Calm and self-collected, but stern and resolved, the general bent his terrible brows and fixed his piercing eye upon the unfortunate moollah-bashie with a meaning that told him his treachery was known, and his fate sealed. Neither fire nor impatience burned in that glance; it was fraught with the lofty expression of supreme contempt, and conveyed the fiat of irrevocable doom, unmingled with any personal resentment against its victim. "What thou hast spoken thou hast spoken!" said his highness at last, in a deep and impressive voice. "It is enough. Creatures like thee it is, despicable reptiles, that crawl among the grand and venerable structures of a state, deform them with your nauseous slime, make your vile burrows in their lofty chambers, then treacherously undermine them, and glory in their decay. Learn, to thy confusion, that

thy presumption is known, thy plots discovered, thy impotent malice baffled, and thyself become the victim of thy own besotted, arrogant folly. I denounce thee as a traitor to the state, and adjudge thee to a traitor's doom. Furoshes, seize the culprit! Nassakchees, do your office!"

No time was allowed for remonstrance. The moollah, pale and trembling, aghast at the gulf which thus suddenly yawned under his very feet, was at first unable to articulate a word; and when the power of speech returned, it was too late. The furoshes had seized upon him, and the fatal cord was already round his throat. He gasped and struggled powerfully, as the nassakchees drew tight the instrument of death; but his words were lost in the gurgling rattle of strangulation, and after a few seconds of terrible agitation, his heavy frame lay fixed and motionless before all the assembly in the stern gripe of death.

An universal shudder ran through the spectators at this unexpected and appalling sight; and terror, indignation, or disgust, began not only to prevail, but to evince themselves among the spectators, according to the courage and the feelings of each individual. But Nadir knew his power. With that cool presence of mind and decision both of tone and purpose, which well he knew there was none could withstand, he instantly stepped forward, and boldly addressed them:—

"Khans, chiefs, and soldiers of Iraun, behold an act of imperative, irrefragable justice ! Know ye these priests, these moollahs ?—they who devour the fat of the land, and drain it of its wealth to fill their own coffers ?—they who shrink like cowards from the face of danger, yet in the hour of safety and peace domineer over the very men by whose blood and treasure those blessings have been purchased ? Ye have fought for peace and for security, and ye have won them. Are the fruits of your toil to be blasted by the treachery of insidious moollahs or hypocritical priests ?—Think you that the carrion which lies before you cared the value of one shahree for the religion which he made the pretext for his rebellious insolence ? Had he done so, his conduct would have been far different. The law of God and of his holy Prophet ordain reverence and obedience to our lawful rulers; yet this man was plotting their destruction. What think you of his seeking to seduce the minds of my brave soldiers from their duty and allegiance ? Fool that he was !—he might have adventured on some easier treason ; but he knew not those with whom he sought to deal. Ye are amazed ; but proofs are extant : there are among you some who know the truth full well ; and the eye of Nadir is not closed, nor his penetration dull. That eye now vigilates over the safety of the state ;—let traitors

tremble. They have witnessed a traitor's fate—let them look to themselves!"

The effect of this address completely justified the penetration and self-confidence of him who uttered it. Again did thunders of applause, mingled with prayers for the health and prosperity of their general, burst from the ranks of the mighty army, which surrounded the august pavilion; and the rabble beyond its limits, ignorant and careless of every thing but the excitement of the scene, re-echoed its shouts. The more select assembly, which was inclosed by that formidable wall of troops, was less loud in the expression of its feelings. Doubtless there were among them many who felt but small disposition to applaud; but the scene they had just witnessed had made its due impression on their minds; and if not contented, they had sufficient prudence at least to be silent.

The prompt punishment of the moollah-bashee was in fact one of those vigorous master-strokes of policy which, boldly conceived and as suddenly executed, were wont to give confidence to the friends of Nadir, while they struck terror into his foes. The whole fabric of, intrigue and treachery of which the moollah-bashee had been the principal and most active contriver, fell instantly and innocuous to the ground. His agents, appalled by the fate of their chief, slunk into their

secret retreats, while such few as had been seduced for a moment by their specious arguments, returned to their duty with an ardor and sincerity proportioned to the shock which had been inspired by the punishment of the tempter.

Not another word was said in defence of the Sheah tenets, or in fact about religion in any shape ; and when the edict went forth by which the national mode of worship was changed, like a ceremonial of state, those whose scruples of conscience would not permit them to adopt in public the new form of worship, were content to nurse their prejudices, and say their prayers in secret.

But this was not the only nor the severest blow which Nadir meditated against the priesthood. On the third day, when the deputies of the assembly waited upon him with their formal acquiescence in the terms he had stipulated for, as those on which he would accept the crown, he directed the chief mojetecheds and the mootwullies* of the various shrines and medressas of the land to attend upon his pleasure, and to bring with them correct returns of the revenues of their several establishments. They did so in fear and trembling ; but anticipating some attack upon their temporal goods, they were induced to frame their returns on a scale which they hoped might deceive

* High-priests, and superiors of the shrines, &c.

his highness, and render lighter the assessment which they dreaded. It was a most ill-judged and unfortunate precaution.

"I see," said Nadir, "that you do not yet sufficiently know with whom you have to deal; that you are not aware how dangerous it is to feign or prevaricate with me. Examine these papers, and see whether *my* information on these subjects be not as correct as your own:" and with these words he handed to them scrolls containing exact returns of the revenues enjoyed by every principal religious establishment in the kingdom, amounting, it was asserted, to a fifth of the whole revenue.

"And how," continued he, after enjoying their confusion for some minutes, "how is this enormous sum disposed of?—what do ye do for it and with it?" They replied, trembling, "That it was laid out in maintaining mosques, colleges, and durgahs, with the priests and khadums officiating in these establishments, who spent their time in praying incessantly for the prosperity of their sovereigns, and the success of their arms."

"Hoh! is such the case?" replied Nadir; "I am concerned to hear it; for either you have been very remiss in your duty, or the Almighty is disgusted with your hypocrisy, and will not listen to your prayers. You say you pray fervently and constantly; yet for more than fifty years past the

kingdom has been gradually falling deeper and deeper into distress and misfortune, until the chosen instruments of the Almighty—my brave soldiers—by exposing their lives in defence of its existence, have succeeded in restoring its prosperity and redeeming its lost glory. They therefore are the priests to whose services we are indebted, and to their support should the revenues of these shrines and holy places be appropriated: henceforth I shall take care that such shall be the case."

Thunderstruck and terrified, the holy and learned men hung down their heads in painful silence. To remonstrate, they saw, was in vain;—to resist, impossible. The army, the greater number of which were already soonies, were highly gratified by the resolution of their general; and the rest cared little about the matter. All of them disgusted, if not jealous of a proud and lazy priesthood, enjoyed rather than pitied the mortification inflicted upon them; the more particularly, that they were themselves likely to be gainers by the new arrangement. And if there were some among the favourite officers and confidential adherents of his highness disposed to take umbrage at measures which might in their opinion tend to subvert the true religion, their confidence in the integrity and superior judgment of their master, and their enthusiastic attachment to his person, were always sufficient to silence their scruples.

The day of his highness's coronation soon arrived; but how can I, in fitting terms, attempt to describe that magnificent ceremony? The most sage and skilful astrologers were summoned to determine on the most auspicious day and hour for this august event, pregnant with the happiness and glory of Persia ; and according to their decision, upon the twenty-fourth day of the month Zouilhegge, (corresponding with the 26th of February,) in the year of the Hegira 1148, and twelve days before the feast of No-roze, the whole army, brilliantly armed and equipped for the occasion, was drawn out in the spacious plain, surrounding as formerly the pavilion, now decorated in royal fashion with crimson and gold, and inclosed with crimson ser-purdehs. Beyond them were clustered the multitude dressed in their gayest suits, while flags and streamers of every gaudy hue and device fluttered in the sun, and added variety to the scene.

Within the square of troops the chiefs and nobles, all glittering in splendid attire, were ranged as before ; but when the appointed moment arrived, and the crimson screens were withdrawn, every eye was fixed in astonishment and delight upon the glorious sight which burst upon it. The pavilion, fitted up by the hands of cunning workmen in imitation of the celebrated chehl-sittoon, or palace of forty pillars at Ispahan, had its glittering front reflected in the placid bosom of a basin

filled with transparent water, which was broken only by the spray of the fountains that played on its surface and supplied it. On either side of this sheet of water stood in due order a multitude of officers and nobles, the chosen and the trusted of his majesty, in their gorgeous robes of state. Three hundred beautiful youths, with blooming cheeks and eyes like liquid diamonds, clad in vests of white satin richly embroidered with crimson and gold, and holding spears of silver in their hands, were ranged in two rows, like beds of blushing tulips, in front of the pavilion. A throne of beaten gold, and sparkling with jewels, terminated this brilliant vista; while on it sat a figure so transcendently bright, that as the sun darted its rays full upon his person, the dazzled eye could not sustain its splendour: it was Nadir, in his royal robes; who, even when thus attired, looked scarcely more a king than when clad in the unpretending garb which he loved to wear: the native dignity of his mien owed nothing to foreign ornament.

At a signal from the aitimad-u-doulut* the troops fell back on either side: the assembly of nobles ranged themselves in a similar manner; so that the multitude beyond the pale were enabled, although at a great distance, to view the person of their monarch.

“Khans and people of Iraun,” said Nadir, in

* The “trusted of the state”—prime minister.

tones which, though loud and solemn, were gracious as the voice of Israfil, “ behold the sovereign ye have chosen : he accepts the crown, and will watch over your welfare as a father over the happiness of his children. My brave and faithful soldiers! in becoming your king, your general has but increased his power of rewarding your fidelity, without weakening one tie which binds him to you: he acknowledges your services, and they will be soon again required. There are rebels still to cope with; and should Allah smile as hitherto upon our arms, more glorious enterprises yet await us ; still richer fields remain to be reaped by our conquering swords. Ye shall see whether your leader has lost one spark of that fire which so often has lighted you to victory !”

Loud acclamations followed this short address, which was repeated from mouth to mouth, until it reached the extreme verge of the circle of human beings which were almost lost to vision in the distance.

Exactly at twenty minutes after the eighth hour, and after all preliminary ceremonies had been duly performed, the learned astrologers, whose eyes fixed upon their astrolabes had only turned from them upon the heavenly bodies, pronounced the important words, announcing the auspicious conjuncture. It was whispered indeed, that one among them, a dark and moody man, to

whom however his brethren paid high deference, and whose dwelling or country was unknown, had declared that at the very looked-for moment certain strange phenomena had appeared; that the planet Mars had suddenly become visible and of a deep bloody hue, obscuring the milder influences of Zohreh; while the relative positions of Saturn and the Sun were by no means exactly those which had been anticipated and hoped for. But the report, whatever its foundation, was scarcely heard before it was hushed; and its author disappearing, left both its reality and its foundation, if true, matters in utter uncertainty.

Be that as it may, no sooner did his highness hear the summons, than, rising from the throne and standing upon the footstool below it, he uttered a short prayer to Allah, and took the diadem from the aitimad-u-doulut, who held it upon a cushion of gold brocade embroidered with pearls; then changing with his own hands to the right side of his turban the jika or plume which he had hitherto worn upon the left, he placed the royal emblem on his own head. That moment the thunders of the artillery burst forth; the voices of the priests were heard in the mosques reciting the khootbeh, in the name of Nadir Shah, king of kings, and lord of destiny; and the shouts of the troops and of the multitude ascended to heaven. Coins were instantly struck with his

name and titles ; and couriers were despatched to all parts of the empire to publish that Nadir was lord of Iraun, and the father and protector of its children.

The ceremony of this coronation differed from the usual form in one other important particular : no Mussulman priest or moollah attended upon the occasion ; but the Armenian khalipheh or patriarch of Etchmiadzin, who had repaired according to the august orders from his residence in Armenia to the camp at Moghaun, was selected to gird on the royal scimitar ; and doubtless this preference in favour of an infidel priest was intended as a further humiliation of those who had so unguardedly and deeply offended their mighty ruler.

This auspicious day terminated with a series of splendid games. Shooting at gold and silver basins, throwing the jereed, and the performance of various feats of horsemanship, afforded the young officers and other nobles in the camp an opportunity of distinguishing themselves before their august monarch, who distributed kheluts and rewards to all such as proved themselves worthy of notice. Few there were who quitted the royal presence that day without receiving some token of favour ; and many khans and officers of rank and trust were invested with the government of provinces, of districts, or of cities. The rich province

of Azerbijan, with its dependencies of Georgia, Daghestan, and Armenia, was intrusted to the charge of my first and highly regarded patron Ibrahim Khan Zoheir-u-doulut, the brother of his majesty; that of Herât to Baba Khan; while the important government of Khorasan was bestowed upon Reza Koolee Meeza, the eldest son of his majesty, in aid of whom Thahmaseb Koolee Khan Wukeel received orders to act as deputy. Even upon me, the meanest of his slaves, did the sun of favour shed its cheering beams; for the great Nadir, overvaluing my poor services, was pleased to assign to me in charge, under that prince, the border district of the Attock, extending from Serukhs to Diroom. "Your father, young man," did his majesty deign to observe, "was a brave and trusty servant; nor have we found his son less worthy or less faithful. The confidence reposed in him by his king will not gratify him the less, that the performance of the duty it involves will promote the restoration of his father's house, and make his own name honourable in the land where his fathers dwelt."

CHAPTER IV.

THE OUTSET OF A GREAT ENTERPRISE.

CONSIDERATION for the patience of the reader, already perhaps too severely taxed by historical details which may not be generally interesting, renders it expedient again to exchange the prolix narrative of the Ms. for a short notice of the events which are intended to bring forward our hero once more in his own person.

Nadir, after the transactions on the plains of Chowul Moghaum, which confirmed him without a rival in the possession of absolute power; and after an expedition to the Buchtiaree mountains, in which he reduced the wild tribes which inhabit them to obedience, and recruited his ranks from their hardy youth, marched from Ispahan in the month of November 1736, in order to punish the turbulent Affghauns of Kandahar.

This expedition, which he had long contemplated, and indicated to his troops, as the next on

which their services would be required, was undertaken with a force and preparation so much superior to that which seemed necessary for its object, that there can be no doubt of its having served but as a pretext for the extensive levies and assessments, which were requisite for the more important enterprise he meditated, and of which his anticipated success at Kandahar was to be the precursor and the signal. He proceeded then towards Kandahar at the head of eighty thousand men, almost entirely horse, and with a large train of artillery, by the way of Kerman and Aberkoh, leaving his principal general, Thahmaseb Khan, wukeel,* to follow with forty thousand more; that desert and arid route being totally unfit to afford the necessary supplies to the whole force at one time. Indeed with all precautions, and every effort upon the part of the respective governors of towns and provinces on the road, many men and animals fell victims to the effects of want and of fatigue.

The siege of Kandahar was arduous and protracted beyond the anticipations of the shah, whose anxiety to possess himself of this important fortress, the key of Affghanistan, and the gate, as it might be considered, of the road to Hindostan, was commensurate with the magnitude of his object, and the alarm he felt for the

* Deputy, or envoy.

moral consequences of delay upon his troops and the Persian people. Accordingly, his efforts to press forward his offensive operations were indefatigable, and cost him a great expenditure of men and stores. But Hussun Ghiljee, the chief who had usurped, or acquired possession of the place, was a man of courage and resolution, commanding a brave and numerous garrison, in a strong and well-stored fortress ; and eighteen months were wasted in these attempts before Hussun, hopeless of any longer effectually resisting his determined opponent, sent his sister, an able and beautiful princess, to negotiate with the conqueror for terms. The result was, that the fortress was delivered up, and the lives of the chief and his family spared ; but the prudence of the victor suggested that so resolute an enemy could never be safely left in his rear, and accordingly they were all sent into the distant province of Mazunderan for the rest of their lives.

The fall of Kandahar produced an effect upon the whole of Affghanistan as great as its conqueror could have desired. In truth, its consequences were more important than the most sanguine mind could have anticipated ; for while it secured the tranquillity of Khorasan, and prostrated the spirits of the Affghaun tribes, the throne of Dehlee itself was shaken by the blow. Overawed by the fate of a fortress deemed im-

pregnable, many of the strong-holds of the country submitted without an effort, and others fell an easy prey; while the tribes of the Affghauns, losing confidence in their own unfortunate leaders, and imagining that Nadir enjoyed the immediate favour of Heaven, flocked in crowds to his standard, speedily filling up the blanks which fatigue or the sword had made in his ranks. The Ghiljees in particular, deprived of their chief, were forward in presenting themselves as recruits; and being brave and active, they failed not to gain favour in the eye of a prince bent upon an expedition of supreme importance.

It was only after the fall of that fortress that the object of this expedition, the long and secretly cherished, but most brilliant vision of the ambitious Nadir, and the subject of dubious speculation among his officers and troops, was openly acknowledged by their leader, and became a topic of general discussion, as well as of eager interest among his followers. Trained by a long course of victory to place implicit confidence in the wisdom of their distinguished captain, they looked forward undoubtingly to success; and saw by anticipation much of the wealth of that luxurious empire, which was the object of their cupidity, already in their grasp.

It falls not within the province of a work like this to speculate upon, or examine the merits of

the motives which stimulated Nadir to so bold and gigantic an enterprise as the conquest of India. His own manifestoes assign the general and affronting contempt which the court of Persia had suffered from that of Dehlee ; the neglect of his ambassadors, the breach of promises, and ancient treaties, of which that infatuated government had been guilty towards an old and faithful ally, as his motives to so hostile a proceeding. Contemporary historians assert, that in confirmation of his own ambitious views, certain malcontent nobles of the Indian court,—namely, Nizam-ul-Moolk, soubahdar of the Deccan, and Saadut Khan, soubahdar of Oude, two of the most distinguished ameers of the empire, had been induced to enter into a correspondence with Nadir, which terminated in a direct invitation to invade the country of Hindostan, under assurances of their secret assistance in smoothing the way to conquest.

Probably the resolution of Nadir had its origin in all these motives combined. That the court of Dehlee had been guilty of unpardonable neglect to that of Persia, is acknowledged : that Nadir's ambition and thirst of conquest had led him to contemplate with longing desire a prey so rich as the plunder of even the northern provinces of India, is too probable to admit of doubt ; and that Nizam-ul-Moolk and Saadat Khan did tamper with a leader whom they might hope to use as an

instrument of terror for their own purposes, is, we believe, a fact too well authenticated to be questioned. But that these noblemen contemplated the desolation which their treachery accelerated if it did not cause; far less their own utter destruction, which that desolation involved; or that Nadir, however sanguine, however ambitious, anticipated a triumph so extensive and so easy, or a prey so rich, a booty so enormous, it would be absurd to imagine; and the event may in both cases serve as a striking instance of the blindness of human wisdom, of the shortsightedness of all human calculations.

Whatever were his motives, it is certain that the greatest efforts were made for increasing the force and perfecting the equipment of the army which was to effect this great and favourite enterprise. Accredited officers were despatched throughout every province of Persia for supplies of money and men; and in order to render his progress more easy and certain, the gentlest policy was put in practice throughout the Affghaun territories. Far from retaliating upon this people the miseries which their countrymen had wrought upon Persia, while Ghiznee, and Bamian, and Ghorebund,* with all their strongest fortresses and cities, fell one after another into his

* Principal cities and fortresses of Afghanistan.

hands, his measures were all conciliatory to their inhabitants. All who submitted were treated with the greatest clemency; and even those who resisted, in the vain hope of ultimate success, when (in the words of the Ms.) "they did cover their heads with the dust of repentance, and appeared at the footstool of his majesty in the garb of humility, were received into the sunshine of the royal favour, and were treated as erring but contrite children."

Thus the march of the army from Kandahar to Caubul was comparatively rapid and unresisted. But in advancing from the latter city towards Peshawur they met with more serious opposition; for the mountainous country which intervenes between these two cities was inhabited by wild and warlike tribes, whose chiefs had during the reigns of many successive emperors been retained in the pay of the court of Dehlee; and although of late they had received but little of their stipulated wages, they felt themselves from habit bound to resist the march of an invading army.

The resistance of such a foe in such a country presented a far more serious obstacle to the advance of the Persian army than Nadir had yet encountered; for in a series of defiles every pass became the scene of a conflict, and they won their way at the lance point, mile by mile, and often foot by foot.

Still chief after chief and clan after clan submitted, as the overpowering deluge of the Persian force passed over and enveloped them ; and the flower of their youth added strength to the arm which had subdued them. But though mercy and conciliation characterised the general conduct of the shah, there were some among those who had the temerity to oppose his progress, whose obstinacy or offences were held too great for pardon ; and on such, as examples to others, the sword of vengeance fell with unmitigated fury ; and chief among these was the brave, but cruel and intemperate chieftain Waled Meer Abbas, a Ghilgian of good family and considerable influence, who was governor of Jelallabad, a city of high importance, situated in a rich plain nearly midway between Caubul and Peshawur.

This imprudent person had arrested and slain an envoy, accompanied by certain chiefs of Caubul, who had been intrusted by Nadir with letters of consequence to the emperor of Dehlee, on their passage through the district of Jelallabad ; and the shah, enraged at so wanton an outrage, swore that, cost what it might, the perpetrator of it should rue the day he violated the sacred laws of international hospitality, and insulted the dignity of two mighty sovereigns. The duty of bringing this mountain ruffian to justice was intrusted, as

it appears, to our hero ; and, as his account of the expedition may be interesting, as descriptive of that part of the country, and the nature of their mountain warfare, it shall be given in his own words.

CHAPTER V.

AN EXPEDITION.

No sooner had the city of Jelallabad submitted to the royal arms, and tasted of its clemency, than his majesty resolved that Waled Meer Abbas, its late governor, and the murderer of his ambassador to the court of Dehlee, should drink the bitter cup which his crimes had prepared for him. Abandoning the city, when he saw that resistance must be vain, and aware of the fate which awaited him should he fall into the hands of an injured monarch, this infatuated and wicked chieftain fled, along with his most trusty followers, to a fastness in the mountains, believed to be inaccessible to any enemy, and where he had little doubt of eluding all pursuit. But difficulties only stimulated his majesty: an example of his inflexible justice was as necessary as the repeated proofs he had given of his great clemency. He determined to convince these mountain banditti that their fastnesses and

rocks could afford them no protection against the royal arm, and he fixed upon me, the humblest of his slaves, to give them this proof of his power.

Three thousand troops were placed under my command for this purpose. Of these one thousand were Affshars—men of my own country and clan ; a thousand were Buchtiarees—mountaineers, hardy, brave, and resolute, fitted peculiarly for warfare such as this ; men who had often distinguished themselves since the army entered Affghanistan. The rest were Koords and Georgians, all known for their zeal and courage ; and the duty we had to perform required the highest exertion of these qualities.

It was on a morning in the month of August that we quitted the royal camp with intent to seize upon Waled Meer Abbas in his den. Where that den was precisely situated, or what its nature might be, not one of us could tell : thus much alone we had ascertained,—that it was retired, full two days' march into the Koonur mountains at the foot of the Hindoo-Coosh, and was considered impregnable, as indeed might be gathered from its name, which in the Affghaun tongue signifies “the nest of the falcon.” Our ignorance of the country was very imperfectly supplied by the attendance of guides, whose fidelity, when employed against a chief of so much influence, was at best but dubious. But the soldiers of Nadir were trained rather to

conquer difficulties, than to calculate their magnitude,—to execute commands, than to question their practicability. The order had been given, and the duty was to be performed ; the means were in our arms, our own courage and personal resources, and in the happy fortunes of our great master, which rarely deserted the efforts of his zealous and worthy servants.

The heats of summer had at this time given way, in some degree, to the powerful influence of a strong north-easterly wind, blowing fresh from the snowy peaks of the Hindoo-Coosh, which rose glittering in our sight. The rice and maize, yellow and rustling, courted the hand of the reaper ; and the sugar canes, which cover many parts of the fertile district of Jelallabad, were ready to yield their luscious juice to the pressure of the rollers ; while extensive fields of melons and cucumbers of every kind invited our thirsty lips, as after fording the Caubul river, we marched across the richly cultivated plain towards the mountainous district of Lugnaun.

We marched throughout the day with the perseverance of men devoted to their object ; yet in spite of our exertions night had well-nigh closed in upon us, as after ascending a winding pass which terminated a rich but hilly tract of country, we descended into the beautiful and varied valley of the Ullergaur river. Our quarters for the night were at a Ghiljee village, the reish suffeed of

which received us with the forced submissiveness of one who gives what he cannot withhold ; and there was something in his demeanor which induced me to take very strict precautions against surprise or treachery. An ample and trusty watch was kept : the word was passed for sleeping on our arms : our guides, in whom symptoms of uneasiness had more than once been observed, were carefully secured ; and every species of communication between them and the villagers was utterly prohibited. The night, however, passed without any further alarm than what might be taken at the surly countenances of our entertainers ; and at an hour unusually early in the morning we resumed our march, in order, if possible, to outrun the news of our advance ; or, at least, to leave to our enemies as little time as possible for preparing to receive us.

During the early part of the morning we traversed an extensive cultivation, partly covering the flat ground on either side the stream, and partly ascending the hills which projected from the loftier mountains, retreating into their tributary glens, or hanging in terraces above our heads, as we slanted up the steeper slopes.

At length the valley itself began to contract, and its tributaries to compete with it in size and grandeur. The mountains gradually increased in scale ; their projecting shoulders grew more sweep-

ing and majestic ; the rocky precipices more scarped and lofty ; and the forests which clothed them more shaggy and dense. Villages became rare, and cultivation still more so. Not a human figure was to be seen ; the whole tract appeared to be deserted by human beings. Every step increased the difficulty of our progress ; and accustomed as we all were to mountain passes and warfare, the officers began to cast anxious looks around them, and to eye the guides with glances of mistrust. But we knew that the hold of Meek Abbas was remote and difficult of access ; and to reach it without much toil and some danger, was a degree of good fortune not to be calculated on.

For my own part, I was neither insensible to the responsibility which rested on me, nor to the anxious feelings of those who were placed under my charge ; for our situation was such as to awaken my full powers of acuteness and forecast. The country was of a character admirably calculated to favour the designs of a treacherous enemy ; and it was obvious that the greatest circumspection alone could protect us against the consequences of a well-concerted ambuscade, should such be prepared for us ; but I knew the men who formed my party, and felt secure in their skill and resolution let danger appear in what shape it might.

The guides had hitherto been marched in front of the *carawul* or advanced-guard, each riding

between two tried and determined men, and under the immediate charge of a deh-bashee* of my own corps, in whom I could implicitly confide ; and the orders they had were, in general terms, to prevent escape, and to keep a watch upon their movements. But as there appeared to be no good reason, at first sight, to doubt the honesty of men who had been provided by persons in the full confidence of his majesty, these customary precautions had till now been somewhat loosely attended to. The suspicious nature of the country, however, and a degree of jealous uneasiness which, though conscious of, I could scarce account for, induced me to direct their being more strictly enforced. I rode therefore on to the head of our column :—“ Bucht Allee,” said I, “ we approach the enemy’s position : is this the way you comply with your instructions ?—Let these guides be better looked after :—why are their arms thus at liberty ?—where are your cords and sashes ?—For shame ! let them be properly secured ;—not too tight :—there ; leave them the free play of their limbs, but not the power of escaping on a sudden.—So.—Now, men, be on your guard ;—ride pistol in hand—you know your duty.”—“ Chushm !” replied the deh-bashee ; and the two men, secured with sufficient tenderness, but not without remonstrance on their part, and a degree

* Commander of ten men ; a sergeant.

of confusion which attracted my own notice, as well as that of their guards, were ordered to proceed as before at the head of the advance.

Single horsemen were now thrown out in front and on either flank, a little a-head of the carawul; and a few active persons on foot were ordered to mount the rocky promontories which shut in the deepening ravine as we advanced, in order to detect the remotest symptom of a lurking foe. Thus jealously cautious, we proceeded for several hours towards a point where the glen divided into three subordinate chasms, each of which brought its tribute to the stream, along whose banks we had as yet chiefly advanced.

At this place the deh-bashee, halting till I came up, addressed me:—" May it please your lordship, the guides have pointed out the middle of these ravines as that which leads to the stronghold of Meer Abbas; but such information as I possess would lead me to take the left as the true one:—will it please you to examine them yourself?" I assented of course, and passed the word for the column to halt. The men were brought forward and interrogated.—" Yes, protector of the poor!" replied they to my question,—" the road lies along the middle ravine, and through it you will have to march."—" But do you assert that the '*Falcon's Nest*' lies at the head of yon ravine, and not as we have under-

stood, in that to the left?"—"It is true, your lordship, that the fortress of Meer Abbas does, as your officer has said, lie nearer the head of the left hand ravine; but the road which leads by it is impassable for horse:—this is the best road;—on our heads be it!"—"And how far distant may the fortress yet be?"—"Your lordship has still ten eos* to go: you cannot reach it to-night; you must halt four eos short of it, and take the early dawn for the rest of your march."—"How! not reach it to-night? This is contrary to my information."—"I cannot say how that may be, sir, but it is impossible: the road is bad enough by day; impracticable for horse by night: you would lose half your force, and never advance the faster."—"Beware! this sounds like treachery! you would give the enemy time to learn our advance, and prepare for our reception." A grim shadowy smile of contempt curled the harsh features of the guide for a moment, as he replied,—"If Waled Abbas, the son of Meer Zumaun, be not already informed of your march, and upon his guard, it is not from the mouth or the conduct of your servant that the news will reach his ears:—the way is as we have said;—upon our heads be the blame! If falsehood be found on our tongue, we are in your power.—I have spoken—it is enough."

* A eos is an Indian measure varying from one and a half to two miles.

To so decided an affirmation no reply could be made. Strangers as we were to the country, how could we gainsay our guides? It remained but to exercise our best judgments on the apparent probabilities of their statement. I held a short council, and the opinions of my officers were divided. Fouje Beg Khan, commander of the Buchtiarees, a chief of mountaineers and experienced in their ways, observed, that though doubtless the path by which our guides proposed to conduct us bore traces of being frequented, there was another, and still more trodden, so far as he could judge, which diverged to the left; concerning the direction and termination of which the guides would or could afford no very satisfactory information. Another officer pointed out to me the closing mountain peaks which towered in our front, and put it to my judgment, whether their vicinity, and the obviously close termination of the valley, gave any indication of a march so long as *that* our guides had prepared us for: and Noor Mahomed, who had accompanied me, declared that all the intelligence he had collected went directly to convince him that the place we sought for lay greatly further to the left than the account given by the guides would indicate.

Still, others observed that our doubts rested on no solid foundations: they were mere suspicions, which might prove erroneous, and were

by no means sufficiently defined to warrant our acting contrary to the directions of our accredited guides ; and our consultation at length terminated in a resolution to proceed as they should lead us ; but maintaining the most jealous and vigilant look-out, and taking every precaution against surprise which our experience could suggest.

Accordingly, the advance had just crossed a rapid stream, which flowed down the eastern gorge, and were rounding the dark rocky promontory which separated it from the ravine, through which our march was to be directed, when a shout rung through the air, attracting the attention of all to the figure of a man, clad in the sheep-skin jacket and woollen vestments of an Affghan peasant ; who with very energetic gestures and continued exclamations, beckoned us to halt and go back.

The surprise excited by the suddenness of his appearance occasioned a momentary pause of those in advance ; and I had just given orders to some of those near me to dart forward and seize the man, when we observed him rushing down what appeared to be the bare face of a precipice, with the obvious intention of joining us.

We halted therefore until he reached the termination of his dangerous course ; and scarcely had he approached within ear-shot, when he broke out in earnest and hurried tones, addressing those

who were nearest to him:—"Whither are you going, madmen?—where is your commander?—does he know what he is about?—Stop your march!—halt, and lead me to him instantly!"—"Well, friend," replied I calmly, as he was brought, still uttering these exclamations before me, "what means this outcry? why is our course thus interrupted?—Who are you, fellow? and what is your purpose?"

"My purpose is for your leader," responded he impatiently:—"it is with him I must speak."—"Then speak to me for him," replied I, "and speedily, for our time is precious."—"More so than safety or success, it would seem," returned the man; "for you are running full speed into the jaws of destruction. Turn, turn at once, and follow a sure guide, who has braved both toil and danger to warn and conduct you to your object."

"And who may you be, friend, who in the heart of the Ghiljee country are so ready with your proffers of service to their foes? and how know you our objects?"—"A mortal foe to them, as thou art;" replied the stranger, with a grim smile:—"to thee and to thy host a firm and zealous friend! And for your object, you seek the mountain-keep of Waled Abbas; ye would seize the falcon in its nest, but ye have turned from the path."—"Again, I demand who is it that

says we have done so? Trifle no longer, but declare your name and intentions, or ye may find the danger of such wanton folly."

"Who am I, ye would know," replied the stranger, "and ye shall learn it soon. For my intentions I have already declared them. A foe to your foe, I come to guide you to his lair."—"It may be so," replied I; "but we are not accustomed to place our confidence in strangers, nor do we need your aid. We have already sufficient and trusty guides to lead us whither we go." The stranger cast a kindling glance upon the men, who, in charge of their guards, remained not far distant. "Trusty guides call ye them?—treacherous caitiffs rather, who lead you to your ruin. Lions ye may be in valour, yet are ye the destined prey of these crafty foxes, who would lure ye into the hunter's toil. If ye look for success, bind or slay these false villains, who have misguided you; and trust to me who pledge my head that this very night ye shall seize upon your prey."

The frank and resolute bearing of the stranger, and the earnest tone of his address, were doubtless calculated to startle minds already awake to suspicion; yet in an enemy's country, to credit the bare unsupported assertions of a stranger, who unexpectedly proclaimed himself a friend in preference to the guides furnished by persons in the confidence of our master, would have been little

less than insanity : it might be rushing into the very snare we were anxious to avoid. "Friend," said I, after a pause of consideration, "your tale may be true, and yourself may be honest ; but the commander of a force like this, engaged in an enterprise of moment, must have better grounds than the advice of an utter stranger for deviating from the course appointed for him. Produce proofs of your honesty ; convince me by some other evidence that your information is correct, and you will not find me deaf to reasonable remonstrance : if not, delay us no longer—we follow our accredited guides."

"Beware!" said the stranger, with much earnestness : "fling not thus away the chance your better star has given of compassing your object and escaping ruin. Trust not these men. Look at me ! View me well ! Is this the bearing of a traitor ? See ! I am alone, and in your power. I have come in haste—in needful haste, and how should I produce the proof you require ? But I beseech you to believe me when I swear by the sacred Kaaba and by the book of our holy faith, that all I have said is true ; that these guides are false villains ; that the path you propose to take will not lead you to the 'Nest of the Falcon,' and that you are, on the contrary, running headlong into a fatal ambush."

"All this may be true or false," replied I ; "but

my duty is clear, and I cannot swerve from it except upon the strongest and clearest grounds. We must follow our appointed guides ; but you shall also accompany us. If your information is correct, you shall not lack reward ; if otherwise, the punishment of your intended treachery is certain. As for ambush, we are rather too old and too experienced soldiers to dread such manœuvres, or to fail of providing against their effects. Come ! move on along with me. If you are honest, your advice may still be of service."

The stranger regarded me with a bitter smile. "Follower of Nadir," said he, "khan or beg though you may be, know that the man whom you thus unworthily mistrust scorns alike your threats and your promises. He is no servile native of Iraun—no slave of a despot, but a freeborn Affghaun, who can better endure death than injury. My person is in your power, and you can carry it along with you, if such be your pleasure ; but over thoughts and speech you can have no control ; nor can you, unless it is my will, reap any advantage by violence beyond that of depriving one of life who had already risked it in your service. Onwards then, sir, at your own peril, and take the consequences of your obstinacy."

During this colloquy, several of my officers, anxious to learn the occasion of our halt, had gathered round us ; and Noor Mahomed, with the

frankness of his own nature, urged me strongly to place credit in the stranger's words. "That fellow is no traitor," said he, "if I have any skill in looks; his eye is as bold, and his brow is as open as truth itself. Stranger though he be, I would take his word sooner than the oath of these sullen guides."—"Ay," said Bucht Allee, who now came up, "and I, sir, say the same. If these guides are honest men, then has Bucht Allee lost his eye-sight. I saw them start," continued he, "when this stranger shouted from the height; and their confusion when they saw that he had got the advance to halt, was noticed by every one near them. But they are close at hand:—would your lordship see them again?"—"No," replied I, "it needs not—my duty is plain. This stranger brings no credentials, no token. I can pay no further attention to his advice than to redouble all precautions, and hold every thing prepared for the worst that can happen. Move on! Fouje Beg Khan will throw out as many of his best Buchtiarees upon the heights on either flank as may be sure to detect any ambuscade however well-contrived. Noor Mahomed will take charge of the rear-guard. I myself will ride with the advance. Let every man march with his ears open, and his finger on the trigger. Bucht Allee, hark in your ear! This stranger rides with me; let two trusty, active men have charge to watch his motions—secretly,

do you hear? If he be a traitor, he shall meet a traitor's fate! But no undue haste; deal fairly. It may be as you think, that he is the true man; the others the rogues." Then turning to the stranger, I informed him of my resolution. "It is well," replied he, with bitter emphasis: "I go to see how soon and surely ye will rue your overweening prudence and unworthy suspicion.

Remonstrance and discussion ended here. The line proceeded, as best it could, along the rugged and irregular bank of a torrent's bed, in which a diminished stream now foamed and twisted; and in truth the men found no small difficulty in urging their horses up the scarped sides, or athwart the frequent slips that occurred in the gravelly soil; while above them towered lofty forests and overhanging cliffs, which altogether shut out from view the summits of the mountains. Among these our active scouts and flankers made their way against a succession of obstacles which would have completely baffled the energy of most other troops. But accustomed to similar duty in their own rugged mountains, the Buchtiarees were perfectly at home; and in spite of ravines, indentings, and the formidable precipices which often interrupted their course, they contrived to maintain their elevated track, and yet keep pace with the more embarrassed progress of the main body in the bottom of the glen.

In silence, and not without anxiety, did we thus hold on our progress for three full hours, gradually increasing our elevation, and burying ourselves deeper and deeper among the mountainous roots of the Hindoo-Coosh, until the slanting rays of the declining sun shot down a turning of the glen, and lit up the dark rocky spurs that towered over our heads. We had rounded a bold craggy shoulder that jutted into the stream, and admitted our line of march into a deep basin-like hollow, surrounded on all sides by precipices covered with pine-trees, when a faint flash of light from a ridge in front of us struck dimly and uncertainly upon my eye. Instinctively I caught the arm of Fouje Beg Khan, who rode beside me—"Saw you nothing yonder?" said I.—"Where?"—"On the height before us?"—"No."—"What was it?"—"A flash; a faint gleam like that of a weapon glancing in the sun. And—yes, by the head of my father, there it is again!—It is the flash of arms.—What! ho there!—halt!—Pass the word to halt at once. We must examine the ground.—What can these scouts be about?—That ridge is certainly occupied." Scarce had the words passed my lips when a shout from one of these scouts, far above upon the mountain, gave the expected signal of alarm; and in a moment after a dozen of musket shots rang in rapid succession from others of the flankers. "Halt, my men!—halt at once, and

close up!" cried I. "Fouje Beg Khan, dismount your men, and prepare to scale the mountain.—Quick!—Up you face!—let not a man draw breath until he reaches the highest of our scouts. Speed like the wild sheep of their own hills!—The safety of every man of us depends on their alertness!—Baba Allee Beg, fly back to your Affshars in the rear! they too must climb and gain an intermediate height. These fellows think they have us in the snare; but we shall show them that we know yet more of this trade than they.—But stay!—there's no riding up these precipices: let half remain with the horses; the rest press up the mountain. Halt on the upper ridge yonder, unless ye find enemies higher up.

"Stay, noble khan," said the stranger, who had listened in silence, but with awakening interest, as these orders were issued:—"you now find I *had* reason for my warnings. Trust to me now:—let *me* guide these men: I know the ground, and can lead them to a place where a stand may best be made: you will be lost else, with all your courage."—"Content yourself, my friend, as to that matter," replied I: "look at these young men; think you they cannot match these Ghiljee wolves, my gallant Buchtiarees?" And the man, as looking upwards he saw them bounding onwards with the speed of the mountain deer, and already half-way up the ridge,

could not suppress a shout of admiration and surprise. "Baba Allee," continued I, "let this person go with you nevertheless : I can trust in your discretion : you will not suffer yourself to be drawn into an ambuscade.—Have your eyes as well as your ears open.—Go, and good-luck be with you!"

I next turned to look for the guides, who, secured on the first alarm, were now dragged before me. They were sullen and confused, and would give no distinct replies to any interrogatories. They persisted in affirming that this was the way to "The Falcon's Nest;" and asserted, that if the chief had taken the alarm, and mustered his followers to oppose our progress, it was no fault of theirs. Time was now too precious for useless parley ; so charging Bucht Allee to be answerable with his life for their appearance, and to shoot them if we should have the worst of the affair, I cast a rapid glance over the ground, and decided on the necessary movements.

The bluff point, around the base of which we had just wheeled when the alarm was given, ascended in a steep rocky face sprinkled with wood, until it joined a lofty ridge which towered above the left bank of the stream. Further up and in our front rose another ridge, the same from which had proceeded the flash of arms that gave the first intimation of an enemy's presence. Between the

projecting points of these two ridges, and retreating deep into the mountain side, lay the basin I have mentioned, and into which we had now entered, directly under the height, which I had ordered the Buchtiarees and the Affshars to occupy. Part of this valley consisting of an easier slope, had once admitted of a little cultivation, which rose in terraces one above the other, to the foot of a steep and almost overhanging rock. Upon this terraced slope I resolved to take post with my remaining force until it should appear from what quarter the danger was to assail us.

We had not long to wait ; for scarcely had a sharp hand-gallop carried us to the terraces, on which we clustered like bees, before a loud yell bursting from above our heads, was repeated by the shouts of the other parties, as well as by the echoes of the mountains around, until it swelled into the roar of a countless multitude. Then came the quick sharp rattle of musketry, and the tumultuous cries of those who rushed forward to the fight. "There thy are ! there they are !" exclaimed many voices from among us ; and looking upwards, I beheld the upper ridge of the basin, beneath which we stood, bristling with men and spears. Before a word could be spoken, or a gesture made, the rapid glancing of the flashes, and the numerous little clouds of white smoke dotting the side of the hill, announced the volley

which in another moment sent its shot whistling over our heads.—“This will not do,” said I; “the next will tell more sharply: we must change places with these fellows, men!—Up! charge and dislodge them!—Quick! spring from your horses, and follow me!—Bucht Allee, remain behind with the guides, and fifty men to look after the horses.—On, my men!—forward in the name of the Prophet!—Strike for Nadir!—show these robbers what Persian soldiers can do!

The course of terraces terminated at the one end in a precipitous acclivity of rock and gravelly slips, interspersed with stunted brushwood. Throwing down every encumbering article we carried, and retaining only our arms and ammunition, we commenced the fearful struggle by scrambling up this difficult slope. We grappled by the bushes or the jutting rocks, those behind urging on those before, while a part of the rear-guard did their best to return and keep under the galling fire which was maintained by our opponents, and which had already sent some of us rolling down the hill. The exertion was unspeakably severe. Gasping myself, I called to the men to shelter themselves under the bushes or stones, until they should recover their breath: but this soon became too dangerous to be attempted; for now great stones came rolling and bounding down the slope, which, when they happened to strike fair, made a

lane for themselves as they thundered along, beating down all our shelter. Fortunately, however, the greater number of these terrible missiles, gaining way and strength too soon, leaped over our heads harmlessly, only here and there marking the spot where at long intervals they struck with the ghastly remains of some crushed wretch.

The men, aware of their critical situation, pressed on, encouraging one another, although almost reeling with exertion, and at length cleared the space that intervened between them and their enemies: but our loss at this period of the charge was heavy; for, wearied and out-breathed, the first who reached the top were unable to withstand the vigour of their fresh opponents, and fell under their fire or by spear-thrusts. But some of our pehlewans* and veterans, more practised at such work, coming gradually up, their presence of mind and experience turned the scale; for the Affghauns, although individually powerful and brave, possess but little of that vigilant skill and quickness of simultaneous effort which is only to be acquired by a life passed in military action. At first we could only keep our ground; but as others reached the contested spots, we gained on our opponents, until by dint of sheer hard fighting we reached the ridge which had sheltered them at first, and drove them from it, leaving the slope

* Champions.

behind us thickly sprinkled with the dying and the wounded.

The shout which was raised as the men obtained footing and formed upon the comparatively even space which they had won, was echoed from the heights above; and I now could cast a hurried glance at the surrounding scene. The smoke and dust raised by our skirmish still hung lazily about us, and partially interrupted the view; but yet I could discern the height which we had seen from below covered with men in rapid motion. Another look served to show my Buchtiarees and Affshars descending like hawks in full swoop from the heights, and driving before them a cloud of disordered and flying Affghauns, who sought in vain to hold their ground. On their side, doubtless, they had observed our success, and it was their spirited return to our shout of triumph that now rung in the ear of our enemies, and completed their discomfiture.

No sooner had my first orders been given than the Buchtiarees, disencumbering themselves of their heavy cloaks, casting off their large shulwars or loose riding trowsers, and such as wore boots throwing them away, started off in full but silent speed up the shoulder of the hill which they had been directed to ascend: but when they had nearly attained its summit the signals of some of the scouts from far above them induced them to

swerve a little from the line they were pursuing, and to make for a still higher point: by this means they eluded a party of the Affghauns which had concealed themselves in a hollow behind the first height in order to take us in rear, when we should all have entered the basin; and they found themselves at length above, and commanding the main body which lay behind the very ridge I had pointed out for their own post. The Affshars, who had made their way independently of the first, fell in with and engaged the former of these parties, which alarming the main body, they rushed from their ambush to assist their companions; and then it was that the Buchtiarees, who saw the whole game from their superior height, threw themselves down to the relief of their friends, by taking their opponents in rear. It proved a fatal charge for the Affghauns, who, unable to withstand the shock, were urged fairly over the brow of the precipice, where the greater number of them were either cut down or dashed to pieces in their fall.

The shades of evening were now falling; but the battle was at an end; those to whom my own party had been opposed, seeing the fate of their companions, turned tail and fled to join the few that had escaped; nor could we, strangers to the ground, attempt a long pursuit. Carrying along with us such as were near of our wounded companions, we proceeded to more level ground on

the top of the principal ridge, where the ruins of an old village afforded some degree of shelter, and a good tenable position in which to pass the night, now fast approaching.

Here the different parties met together, when mutual congratulations were exchanged and losses compared. The stranger, covered with blood and dust, was now led forward by Baba Allee Beg, who was much in the same livery:—"I bring you, sir," said he, "a true man and a brave fellow:—I pledge my life on his sincerity; no double-dealing traitor ever gave and took such hard knocks as he has done this day; he fought, sir, like a pehlewan." I was advancing to receive the man with a proper compliment, when he prevented me, by stepping forward himself and taking off his Affghaun cap, which he placed at my feet; at the same moment he bowed almost to prostration, and seizing my hand, he kissed it with fervour. Surprised by the rapidity of his action no less than by his change of demeanour towards me, I started back, and endeavoured to raise and address him, but he interrupted me— "Brave and powerful chief," said he, "receive my unqualified submission.—Allah and his Prophet assuredly are on your side: dispose of Poy-undeh Saafee at your pleasure: the wish of his heart is to follow such a leader! and he craves

your pardon, if his conduct has hitherto been rude or unseemly."

"Friend Poyundeh, if such be your name," replied I, "it verily doth appear that you are the honest man, and the others the false knaves, according to your first showing; and I in my turn crave your excuse for a conduct which, although pointed out in my humble judgment by duty, has proved unjust to you: but you shall have cause to know that Ismael Keerkloo is forward to repair his errors, and deal justice when he can to the good and to the evil.—But instruct me;—what may be the cause of this change of tone to me?—at first all haughtiness and rudeness;—now all submission and respect:—explain this inconsistency, if it please you."

"My lord," replied Poyundeh, "they say that we Affghauns are rough untutored fellows, too proud of our ancient race and our freedom to waste a kindly thought or bestow a civil word on any stranger of another land; and the charge may be just, for such were my own feelings when evil fortune, as I then thought, compelled me to apply to you for aid. But we are brave as well as proud: battle and broil are as our daily food; and woe to the man or to the tribe that shrinks from upholding with the sword the possessions or the name which his fathers have won. Courage and

conduct are the qualities we idolise. Our mountain tribes, we Saafees in particular, are held as good soldiers; and I for one can deal a hearty blow, and bide the hiss of a matchlock ball, with any of my neighbours: but, Ullah! what are the best of us to what I have seen to-day? Such fearless courage, such obstinate perseverance, such skill and forethought!—by the blessed Omar it is all new to us! No wonder ye are our masters: it is the will of God, undoubtedly; and it is vain for us to oppose it. It was written on our foreheads that we must submit; and that submission I now tender.—Accept, sir, of my services; they may still be worth your notice; and they will not fail you in the hour of need.”—“I doubt it not, comrade,” said I, “I doubt it not; and we may find you employment. But tell me shortly, what is the nature of your displeasure at the Meer, and the cause of your sudden friendship to his foes?”

“Shortly, then, sir, I beg to state for your information, that when this Waled Abbas—on whose soul be eternal curses!—was governor of Jelallabad, he swayed the rod of authority over the whole district with a heavy and a partial hand; hating and oppressing the Saafees, who, from their vicinity to the Ghiljees of his own khyle,* were frequently at variance and even in open war

* A division of a tribe in Afghanistan.

with them. It chanced that my father, who was mullich* of a large village in the Punjecora valley, having been attacked and insulted by a strong party of Allishung Ghiljees, who succeeded in putting some of his attendants to death, instead of making the aggression the ground of a fresh feud, thought fit to apply to this Meer, in his capacity of governor and protector of the district, for the satisfaction due to such an outrage. Had it been me, perhaps,—but my father is no more—let not the dead be blamed—we differed on the subject—age and youth will see the same object in very different lights—I thought, may Heaven forgive me if I were wrong ! that the best argument a brave Affghaun could use was the sword which hung by his side. My father, of cooler blood and more experience, who knew too well that the best cause does not always make the strongest arm, and saw in such a course but the commencement of a fresh and a bloody quarrel, rebuked me for my forwardness :—“No,” said he, “let us first trust to the appointed legal means for redress: the perpetrators are of the Meer’s own kindred, and he may influence them to do us right: if he will not, he sins in the sight of God and man; and our swords are then our only defence and recourse.” I shook my head :—“You

* Chief.

will never gain any point from the Meer's love of equity or virtue: on the contrary, he will take advantage of your forbearance, to your loss, if not your ruin; and your courage and your cause will suffer in the eyes of men; but it is my duty to yield, and I do so with a foreboding heart." My words were prophetic as it seemed:—not only was satisfaction refused by the Meer; but the villain, mistaking, as I feared, our forbearance for timidity, fabricated a false charge of treason and perfidy against my brave and honourable father; had him seized, along with three of my brothers, and thrown into confinement, from which they never were released, except by the hand of death; and that soon came: they were foully poisoned in their prison.

"This blow destroyed our family and name: some others of its members were removed in an equally treacherous manner; and I alone remain of my father's sons to avenge his murder. Do ye now acknowledge the justice of my hatred? Have I not reason to thirst for the blood of the tyrant?—and shall it not flow to quench that thirst?—to pay the heavy debt of vengeance? Yes, it does hang over him. I have dogged him like his shadow; and in the depths of his very harem has he felt that an unseen arm was lifted against him: in the town, or the tent; on the journey, or at rest; awake or asleep, he feels the presence of a blasting influence:

—he knows that the avenger of blood is on his traces, awaiting but the appointed hour ; and now it has come, and the blow shall be struck. My tribe are all with Nasser Khan, vainly hoping to protect Peshawur against the arms of your king. The few friends I could command are at a distance ; I alone am here, with these arms and this sword, and this head to devote to your service :—but give me only vengeance,—give me what it were infamous to withhold, and dispose of the rest as you will.”

There was a deep concentrated energy in the aspect and bearing of the young Affghaun, as he stood before me, soiled with the blood of his enemies and the dust of the conflict : his fierce grey eyes kindling yet more wildly with the excitement of his narrative, which affected me even more powerfully than his words, although the facts they related were of themselves sufficient to awaken sympathy. But I restrained the full expression of my feelings at the time. “It is well, young man,” replied I ; “the revenge which you seek shall undoubtedly be yours, if our good fortune hold ; but you are now in the service of our king :—let us know for its benefit where we are :—whither these traitorous guides, who shall soon eat the fruit of their deeds, have brought us ; and in what direction lies the fastness of this Waled Meer Abbas. It is now somewhat late, in truth, and

the long march of this day has had a somewhat severe conclusion ; yet if it were still possible to assault the fort this night, before they can recover from the consternation and confusion of this failure, we would yet advance."

"It is impossible, sir," replied the Affghaun ; "you have been led far out of the direct road ; and well do your enemies know that to retrace your steps, and regain it, would occupy the greater portion of two days : but they are not aware that you have now got a guide who knows these mountains as well as they do. Take up your quarters for the present on this very spot ; wood, water, and forage are abundant, and there is not a position like it in many miles around. In three hours after midnight the moon will be high, and the people rested ; we can then tread with security a path which in darkness would be impracticable ; a path which is familiar to me, and which, though exceedingly toilsome and difficult, is just the one you require, for it will carry you as if from the clouds right down upon the nest of this villainous bird of prey."

"And what may be the distance?"—"The distance, sir, is not so material as the fatigue, and even the danger to be encountered. Six hours of active marching will bring us in sight of the place ; but not a single horse can be taken ; the path is bad enough for men, and totally unfit for cattle. No animal with four feet, except the mountain-goat

and the deer, or the wolves and tigers which pursue them, has ever traversed it."—"Good!—we shall leave our horses then on this very spot, with a detachment to protect them. This old village will make an excellent post. Away, there!—order Bucht Allee Beg and his party to get up the hill before it is quite dark. Send two hundred men to assist with the horses, and let another party go to gather up the rest of our wounded:—this is our ground for some hours;—let every man repair to it with all dispatch."

The remainder of the waning daylight was employed in securing our quarters for the night. The walls of the old village (for once it had possessed such defences), though broken and imperfect, were still capable of being patched up, and rendered temporarily efficient, by placing brushwood and stones in the breaches, and a sufficient number of trusty sentries on the watch. The horses were picketed on the grass which had usurped the place of the village cultivation: a small rivulet supplied us with water; and after a very spare meal, we all lay down upon our arms, and were for the most part soon buried in sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FALCON'S NEST.

TOILWORN and harassed as the men had been by two fatiguing days, it was not surprising that they should await the call of their officers before quitting their hard bed. But however vigilant these officers and the sentinels around the post might be there was one whose alertness surpassed them all. The lover listening in the silence of night for the footstep of his beloved may be surprised by slumber ; the eyes of the astrologer will reel at times, while watching the benignest conjunction of the stars ; but he who thirsts for the red cup of vengeance, like the wretch wounded by a mad dog's tooth, has done for ever with repose : restless and miserable, he wanders like an evil spirit, seeking both day and night for the means of allaying the fever which scorches up his vitals. Long before the hour appointed did Poyundeh repair to the

spot where I lay, and roused me from sleep by his appeal to the guards who watched around me.

“ If you seek to surprise Waled Abbas,” said he, “ let not the precious hours elapse : you may want them all, and more before the day’s work is over. See ! the moon already shows herself over yonder crag : before the men can be in motion she will give light enough to guide our march. May it please our chief, then, to issue orders for commencing it. I am their ready guide.”

So soon as, shaking the sleep from my eyelid, I gazed around, and remembered where we were, I lost no time in following the advice of our new guide. The fitting precautions for securing the post and our horses especially, were duly taken, and in little more than half an hour two-thirds of the whole force, or about two thousand men, were in motion towards “ The Nest of the Falcon.”

The Saafee had not exaggerated the difficulties of our path: seldom have I seen a mountain track more uncertain and more dangerous. The place of our destination lay at the top of the glen, the entrance of which we had crossed on the previous day ; so that a lofty track of peculiarly rugged mountainous ground intervened between it and the scene of our skirmish. Thus, after diving down into the very recesses of the glen along which we came, crossing the torrent at its bottom, and ascending the equally precipitous opposite face, we

found ourselves still entangled in a chain of steep cothuls or gorges, and creeping guardedly along the verge of giddy precipices or rocky slopes, where a false step would have been certain destruction; and all this by the uncertain light of a moon, which every now and then was partially obscured by a grey fleece of clouds.

Morning broke upon us as we threaded our way through a maze of rocky spires and splintered fragments that had fallen from the barren summits above us; where, even at this advanced period of the season, patches of snow might be seen lying in the clefts most removed from the sun's influence; and after continuing our way for full two hours longer with unabating perseverance, the misty hollow of the valley to which we were bound lay opening beneath our feet. At this juncture the Saafee recommended extreme caution:—"We are not far from the place," said he, "and it will be prudent to reconnoitre before we suffer the troops to advance beyond this ridge which now conceals them. They may halt and refresh here for a while, until we collect such information as may afford us the best prospect of moving forward with success. If you dare to trust me, sir, I should hope to perform this duty to your satisfaction."

"I believe your advice to be good," replied I, "and would make no hesitation in confiding to your zeal; but on such occasions it is always my

custom to play the scout myself. I will accompany you, and judge of what must be done."— " My lord, were it not for the risk your person may run, there is no companion I could be so well pleased with : if it please you then we shall move on." The troops were accordingly directed to lie down in hollows, and afterconcerting the necessary signals, we took a pathway which wound downwards through rocks and irregular wood. Our only attendants were five picked men ; and we all carefully muffled our arms to avoid such a discovery as had so materially benefited us, and discomfited our enemies on the evening preceding.

Before we had proceeded more than a mile, the path led us into a more open glen ; but diverging from it at this point, we kept the side of the declivity, and turning after a while an angle of the mountain, we were brought at once in full sight of the valley, which lay close beneath us, with its rapid stream bordered with terraced cultivation, its rich pasture-clothed mountains, and heavy forests, and the dark castellated promontory of "The Falcon's Nest," jutting far into the glen and washed by the roaring torrent. It was a fair, but yet an anxious sight ; for the frowning massy walls and narrow approach betokened us a task of much hazard as well as of difficulty ; and it was obvious, that should we fail in a coup de main, we might reckon on much

delay and heavy loss in the reduction of so strong a fastness, defended by a desperate man, and probably well supplied with men and provisions.

While yet we gazed upon the scene, it became evident that the castle itself was the theatre of some important proceeding. A number of men could be distinguished in active movement within its walls ; and small parties, of from half a dozen to a score in number, were observed in various parts of the glen and on the sides of its surrounding hills ; all bending their course towards the same point. "The alarm is thoroughly spread," observed Poyundeh, with an anxious air ; " see how they are gathering to garrison the place ; we shall have enough to do."—"Not if a plan which has just occurred to me can be carried into effect," replied I after a pause, during which I had taken a rapid but accurate survey of the whole ground about the fortress. "The garrison cannot be aware how near we are ; nor do they expect an attack from this quarter. I will send a detachment in small parties, such as these, who will be taken by those within the walls for friends ; they may easily join behind yon hillock to the left there, and they may conceal themselves among the brushwood which you see until other preparations shall be completed. That shoulder of the mountain from which the promontory springs is somewhat too distant from the place to

command it, indeed ; but it must do : four hundred men shall occupy the flattish space at its extreme point."

" They will not be suffered to remain there," replied the Saafee quickly ; " distant as it is, their fire would perplex the garrison."—" Let them dislodge my people if they can," replied I : " nay, as soon as the rest of the troops shall have taken up their assigned positions, these shall even be directed to challenge an attack. The result will show you a specimen of military manœuvre, Saafee, probably beyond your present calculation."—" Good, sir," replied he, " and I can aid part of your plan, at least. Less than half a mile from the spot where we stand there is a hollow, which leads almost directly to the space behind that hillock ; the men may easily move along its course without being seen from the castle."—" To work then, in the name of Allah!" said I. " And hark ! if you dare, you shall lead them ; but I warn you, that the men who occupy that post will have no children's play, and my officers permit no skulking. You will have a man's part to act there, and you must do it manfully." The grim contemptuous smile, as he repeated the single word " Dare !" and the kindling of his keen grey eye was reply sufficient to my caution, and we returned at once to the troops.

Fouje Beg Khan with six hundred men, guided

by the Saafee, were instantly despatched to the said hollow, which was not above five hundred yards distant from the entrance to the place ; five hundred more were ordered to follow as a reserve, but not to leave the ravine until a signal to that effect should be made. So soon as the first party had reached their destination five hundred men, under command of Baba Allee Beg, were sent boldly forward to occupy the shoulder which commanded the fort, as well as the neck by which it was approached, while I myself remained with the rest, to watch the effect of my various manœuvres.

The moment Baba Allee Beg and his party approached within some hundred yards of their destination, they raised a shout and rushed forwards toward the height ; and so completely occupied it seemed were the garrison in their preparations, that this was the first intimation they had of an enemy's near approach. Probably they did not conceive the difficult and dangerous route we had taken through the mountains to be practicable for an invading army. No sooner, however, was their attention attracted by the shouting of our people, than we could discern an increased ferment within the walls of the fort ; the white smoke of several wall-pieces or jinjaels, and one or two small cannon, glanced from the parapets, and the whistling of the balls might be heard even by those in am-

bush. In a few minutes more the gates opened; and a dark column of armed men issuing forth, passed rapidly along the neck of the promontory, and began to ascend, in order to oppose the invaders on the shoulder.

Baba Allee on his part slackened not his speed until the whole of his party had reached the level point, where he drew them up upon the verge, with a skill and coolness which did him honour. By the time his arrangements were complete the sallying party from the garrison, which considerably outnumbered his, had advanced up the acclivity with all the agility of practised mountaineers, till within an hundred yards of their opponents, when, somewhat outbreathed by their exertions, and disconcerted perhaps by the steady countenance of their enemies, they slackened their pace, as if preparing for a desperate charge. At that critical moment a fire from two-thirds of our line opened upon them with murderous effect. A yell of fury mingled with the cries of their wounded and the irregular discharge of their matchlocks, as they paused in momentary irresolution; but the voices of their chiefs and leaders were heard above the uproar, calling upon them to charge before their opponents could load again. And on they came, thirsting for revenge, in spite of the continued fire from the reserved portion of our troops, which increased the havoc in their ranks.

The object of my arrangements was in some measure attained. I expected that an attempt would be made to dislodge Baba Allee Beg, which would weaken the garrison, and throw the sallying party into my power, by means of the troops concealed behind the hillock. And I was just about to give the signal for these to come forward and cut off the retreat of Baba Allee Beg's opponents, when the gates of the fort again opened and poured forth a fresh party, who in their turn were joined by others who made their appearance from the bed of the river below the castle. "Better and better," exclaimed I, with increased delight, to Noor Mahomed, who stood beside me: "they flock like deer to the snare; every man of them is our own: the more they drain the castle the better; it will be the surer of falling."

The first assailants, encouraged by the shouts of their advancing friends, now pressed hard upon Baba Allee, who had thus become opposed to a force of not less than fifteen hundred men. It was time to give the signal; and while Fouje Beg Khan, issuing from behind the hillock, bore down to the neck of the promontory, the party which I had retained with me started up, and rushed forward to the support of Baba Allee. The yell of despair which arose from the few remaining troops, and the women and children in the fort,

at this unexpected sight, conveyed to their fighting friends, who were too much occupied to look about them, the first notice of their danger : but the effect was instantaneous and conclusive. Assailed at once in front and rear, they were terror-struck, and turned to fly. But flight was no longer in the power of many. A few, profiting of their superior knowledge of the ground, escaped by favour of its irregularities ; but the greater number fell without mercy under our unsparing swords. Among the very few prisoners that were made was Waled Meer Abbas himself; who, in his eagerness to repel the danger which threatened his stronghold, had headed the second sortie, and thus fell into a snare of the same sort as that which he had laid for us only the day before.

The capture of the chief terminated our enterprise ; for the few remaining soldiers, seeing the total rout of their master and his bravest followers, thought only of their own safety, and endeavoured to quit the fortress before the conquering party could reach it. But their intentions were frustrated by the acuteness of our guide, the Saafee Poyundeh ; who, fearful lest his prey should escape, and observing the consternation of the garrison, made a rush to the gates unobserved with fifty or sixty men ; took possession of them, and prevented all egress until troops arrived to

his assistance. Thus when the business upon the hill was at an end we had but to descend and occupy the place unresisted.

The scene which we now encountered, although of a character too common in a soldier's life, was more than usually painful. The women and children, taught to believe all Kuzzilbashes as little better than the devil's children, when they saw the defeat and massacre of their husbands and sons, were distracted between terror and despair; and their shrieks of woe, mingled with appeals for mercy, too often fatally disregarded by the fierce and ruthless soldiery, pierced my very soul; for never did the shriek of a woman assail my ear that the mild image of my own Shireen did not rise in my mind, and plead the sufferer's cause.

As soon as it was practicable I stopped the slaughter and the rapine: but the obligations of duty were imperious: the women of the Meer, including his sister and two wives, were secured according to the royal command, to be dealt with as might seem fitting to his majesty; the rest, miserable objects, and in wretched plight, were permitted to go where they pleased. Some availed themselves of the permission, and quitted the fort to retire into other villages, carrying along with them the dismal tale of their own ruin and their husbands' slaughter. Others, unwilling

to survive their misery and disgrace, put themselves to death with the long knives, which the Affghau women carry at their girdles, or precipitated themselves from the lofty walls of the castle. Some again sought the dead bodies of their husbands or their sons;—ay, or of their lovers,—for many a young maiden was there,—and clasping them in their arms, skew themselves upon the corses.

As for the castle itself, when we came to examine its strength and the mighty stores it contained, the favour of Allah became apparent in the events which had so easily and speedily delivered it into our hands; and we heartily congratulated ourselves upon our success; for great must have been our loss, and very uncertain the issue, without such providential assistance: but the star of Nadir's destiny shed its influence upon us his faithful servants, and confounded the devices of his enemies. So far as we had the means in our power, the fortifications were demolished, with the ammunition and tools found within the walls; and "The Falcon's Nest," which when we reached it was a stronghold of great extent and almost impregnable strength, garrisoned by a valiant army, and affording protection to a multitude of women and children, we left a smoking empty ruin, smeared with blood, and blackened with the fires of destruction, a den of misery and

despair, and the grave of its brave though rebellious defenders.

The chief himself, wounded in body and broken in spirit, was brought before me, as the commander of the party,—the humble organ of his majesty's pleasure. Well did he know that for him there was no mercy. When I reminded him of his crimes, upbraided him with his mad obstinacy, and declared his doom, the pale, gloomy countenance of the Affghaun lighted up with a gleam of indignant fire:—“What I have done, is done,” said he.—“I have lived your master's foe, and his foe I will die. What good cause has he given me to love him?” demanded he, throwing a darkening glance on the ruin around him; the energy of his mind rose superior to his situation, and I began to be moved with admiration of his constancy, and compassion for his fate, when the Saafee at that moment stepped forward like a messenger of evil:—“Tyrant!” said he, in a hoarse unnatural voice, “the day of reckoning is come at last.—Remember Ibrahim Mullich!—Such as the house of Ibrahim was rendered by the arm of Waled Abbas, such is the house of Waled Abbas this day, smitten through the might of the Omnipotent, by the hand of his servant Poyundeh!—My lord, the murderer of my father stands before me!—I demand the price of blood—I

claim this man as my due—the reward of my promised aid."

In a moment the proud flush left the cheek of the Meer as he heard the address of Poyundeh. His eye quailed beneath the withering frown of the young Saafee. But his hardihood at length revived, and he returned his haughty gaze with equal scorn. "Thy aid, thou coward traitor! and darest thou boast that to thee the Affghaun power owes this last blow? Base fool! treacherous worm! thou art beneath my curses. Had Allah not seen fitting to pour out his wrath upon this people, where then had been thy pitiful revenge? Chief of the troops of Nadir! I am thy prisoner; and as such I claim to be conducted to the foot of that throne of which thou art the servant."

"Prisoner," replied I, "the orders of my master are these: that wheresoever Waled Abbas may be taken, on that spot shall he meet his doom. The youth before thee claims of thee the price of blood. He hath, moreover, named that just revenge as the only reward of his services; and my word is passed that into his hand thou shalt be delivered. Such is our sacred law, the injunctions of our holy faith; and far be it from Ismael to break his oath, or contravene these venerable mandates, even had his prisoner merited another fate. Young Saafee, behold thy victim!"

take and deal with him as it seemeth good to thee. But his head must be laid at the feet of the king of kings, in proof that his behests have been obeyed."

"Holy Prophet! is this thy justice?" exclaimed the unfortunate Meer, who, fearless of death itself, was yet appalled at the thought of being thus tamely delivered into the hands of one, who conscience told him, had too much cause to be his mortal foe. "Can a warrior, and a bold one, denounce a doom like this upon a brave man, who has only asserted his own freedom, and repelled the enemies of his country with all his might? Once more I appeal to thy honour as a soldier. See, I am ready!—let me but die by the stroke of the scimitar, as a soldier should meet his death. I seek not to live. Why should I? My family and my tribe are gone—destroyed—cut off. What have I left to live for? But let me not fall bound, by the horrid knife of a mean, cowardly assassin!"

The poignant energy of his appeal penetrated my very soul. I looked at the young Saafee; but the expression of his countenance was dark and impenetrable. Still I hesitated: he saw the workings of my soul, and doubtless dreaded the consequences. "My lord," said he, "I claim your promise. The blood of my father and my brothers—the spirits of my kindred cry out from

their graves upon their kinsman ;—my soul has no peace.” I saw that all was vain, and contended no further. May Allah be my help ! as I strove to do my duty, as I acted according to my belief of what that duty was ; but the pale and noble countenance of the Affghaun chief as he stood helpless before me—his tongue now mute—but his deep-set eyes fixed upon mine with a stern upbraiding look—that look I never can forget. Long after did it haunt my imagination with a force which, though my conscience denied, my heart was forced to acknowledge.

But the worst was spared both to himself and me. The interview I have described took place in a court of the Meer’s own dwelling, in front of the building which had been his own dewankhaneh. Of this court, one side was formed by the external wall of the fort, which, rising to a considerable height above the giddy precipice, terminated in a terrace and parapet accessible from the court by a flight of steps. The whole of this little court, which had been laid out with some attention to comfort and neatness, was now thickly strewed with ghastly mangled bodies, and the buildings were smeared with blood and blackened with smoke. In one corner of this scene of carnage a horse-cloth had been hastily spread for me, and upon it I was seated when the prisoner was brought before me. Sickening with an indescribable feeling

of emotion at the conviction of what was about to ensue, but unable any longer to prevent or retard the catastrophe, I made the signal to the guards who held the Meer, that they should deliver him into the possession of the claimant; and they accordingly transferred the shawl by which his arms were bound into the hands of the young Saafee; while I, hating the sight, turned away my eyes. But they were speedily recalled. I heard the voice of Waled Abbas exclaim: "Is it indeed thus?—then have I but one resource!"—and watching his opportunity, before the Saafee had rightly secured his hold, he sprung from between the guards, and, wounded as he was, rushed with the rapidity of light up the steps of the parapet. Every arm was paralysed, and the beating of each heart was arrested for a moment as the lofty figure of the Meer appeared standing on the giddy verge. "Tyrants and fools!" exclaimed he in tones of ineffable scorn, "I despise—I spit at ye! I am beyond your power." With these words he bounded into the air, and such was the awful silence which prevailed, that the crash of his falling body was heard distinctly ascending from the abyss below.

When we awoke from our sudden stupor of surprise, every man rushed forward to the fatal parapet. But what remained for us to see?—A mangled quivering carcass, senseless as the hundreds strewed around us, was no longer an object

of vengeance or of punishment. With drooping head, and in fixed and moody silence, did the Saafee gaze upon the remains of his deadly foe ; and it was with difficulty that we dragged him from the spot where it lay. The sight seemed to have blasted all his faculties. In sullen apathy he accompanied us back to the camp, and received in common with the officers of our party a dress of honour, and the warm applauses of his majesty. Even such distinguished honours failed to rouse him from his moral stupor. He continued, it is true, to perform his duty well, and few exerted themselves more bravely in action ; but the chilling gloom of his manner remained until the day of his death, which occurred not long after, in a skirmish near Peshawur. When mortally wounded, it was said that his eye regained for a moment its wonted fire, and he was heard to exclaim with fervor : " It is enough !—it is enough !—Father ! brothers !—now I shall be at peace !"

CHAPTER VII.

ARRANGEMENTS AND TRAITS OF A
CONQUEROR.

THE severe example made of the fortress and garrison of "The Falcon's Nest" had the full anticipated effect of awing into submission the turbulent mountain chiefs of the Kohistan, Lugnaun, and the Sufeed-koh, who, neglected and ill paid by the court of Dehlee, no longer felt themselves bound by their former compact to defend the passes of their country ; but listened readily to the overtures of a prince, possessed, as they had seen, of power either to reward or to punish ; and the youth of their clans, particularly the Saafees and the Eussufzehees, dazzled by the prospect of plunder, offered themselves in great numbers as recruits, and were graciously received by orders of his majesty.

At Peishore, which was taken after a gallant attempt to defend it on the part of Nasser-khan its governor, his majesty remained for near a

month to recruit his troops, and organise the mighty armament with which he was resolved to attempt the conquest of Hindostan. Never did conqueror lead forth a more gallant force; in number it amounted to full an hundred and fifty thousand fighting men: of these, thirty thousand were Koords, Affshars, Jelloyers, and Beyauts, from the northern border districts of Khorasan; ten thousand more were furnished by the Toorkoman tribes of the Attock and Karacoum. The tribes of the Lac and Buchtiaree mountains sent fifteen thousand hardy highlanders. Georgia, Daghestan, and Karabang contributed a troop nearly similar in number and in quality. His royal highness prince Reza Koolee Meerza, returning from his conquest of Balkh, and his defeat of Abool-Feize Khan, the monarch of Bockhara, brought along with him fifteen thousand soldiers of these countries. His father, sympathising perhaps with fallen royalty, but as some, wrongfully no doubt, insinuated, jealous of his son's rising fame, laid his commands upon him to desist from further hostilities, to restore the humbled king of Bockhara, and to return to Persia, there to busy himself with the affairs of state left to his supervision in the absence of his majesty: but of the Balkh soldiers he retained twelve thousand hardy fellows to increase his own power, while diminishing that of his late opponent. Of the Affghaun

tribes, and chiefly mountaineers, Ghiljees, Abdallees, Saafees, and Eussufzehees, full five and twenty thousand picked young men had been enlisted. Besides these several distinct national troops, there were the guards in immediate attendance on his majesty, completed to their fullest numbers, and equipped in the most perfect and splendid style; his faithful gholams and nasakchees of themselves, including their especial servants, amounting to five thousand men;—the royal hadjee-bashees, jeloodars, and chaooshes, each a corps of a thousand strong, together with a great number of shatirs, furoshes, peishkhid-muts, and grooms, all bound to shed the last drop of their blood in defence of the king of kings. The remainder was formed of individuals from every part of the royal dominions, who were divided into regiments commanded by a mimbashee, and the customary compliment of inferior officers. And there was besides a great number of horse-keepers, muleteers, camel drivers, and even shop-keepers and sutlers, who followed the camp for the convenience of the troops, but every one of whom was armed and mounted upon a good horse or a stout yaboo; and all were accustomed to take their places in the field and perform the duty of good soldiers in the hour of action. Even the women, who were permitted to follow the camp to the number of six or seven thousand, some of

them being slaves taken in war, and others, wives voluntarily following their husbands and sharing their toils, were all mounted and armed like the men ; and clad in their scarlet barounies girt about their waists, and wearing shawls wound like turbans round their heads, appeared in the eyes of their enemies like a band of heroes, ready to sacrifice their lives for victory : nor did their conduct bely their appearance, for they were often found upon the field of battle performing the duty of the bravest soldiers.

Throughout this mighty host there was scarce a heart which did not beat in unison with that of its mighty leader, and burned to take a share in the brilliant enterprise he had set before them. In truth, if such did exist,—and among so great a multitude, who could say that there was not one craven ?—that among so many true-bred falcons there did not lurk a single carrion-kite ?—if such there were, they had discretion sufficient to keep their disgrace to themselves; for the master whom they served was not the man to suffer base metal to mingle with the true steel of his well-tried warriors. In fact, while organising his forces, and preparing for new and distant conquests, so far was he from relaxing the reins of discipline, that he saw fit on the contrary to tighten them; and while on the one hand he evinced less tolerance than ever for the coward who shrinks from his

duty, he visited with increased severity the smallest infraction of his established military regulations.

In these views his majesty found himself vigorously and effectually seconded by his officers, who, chosen as they were by himself, not for birth nor from favour, but for their courage, their steadiness, and military talents, had learned to value qualities to which they owed their own exaltation; and sought to implant and cherish them in every one under their command. Cruel, rapacious, dissipated, and reckless, some of them might be, and doubtless such men there were among them; but for the slightest taint of cowardice, insubordination, or treachery, you would have searched in vain. Thus the spirit of their chief was infused throughout all ranks of his followers; and so perfect was the system of vigilance he had established, and so strict the nature of the reports he exacted from his officers, that few offenders could escape the reward of their misdeeds; and terrible, even cruel, were the punishments he inflicted. The following instance, one of many that could be adduced, may serve as a specimen of the unrelenting rigour with which any breach of discipline was always visited.

As his majesty desired rather to conciliate than to revolt the Affghaun tribes while traversing their country, the troops were strictly prohibited from injuring any of those who should comply with

the requisitions made for the service. Plundering and insult of every description were forbidden under severe penalties. During the residence of the army at Caubul in particular, when great efforts were required for maintaining sufficient stores of provision and forage, and detachments of troops were scouring the country around to support the collectors in levying from each district its proportion of grains and stores, it became more difficult, and therefore more necessary, to maintain the observance of these rules. It happened that a risaleh, or troop of a hundred horsemen, chiefly Koords from the turbulent districts of Boojnoord and Semulghaun, had been sent to overawe a large village named Chowkree, some fifteen or eighteen miles distant from Caubul, where, from the character of its mullick or chief, some resistance was apprehended in levying the collection.

Resistance, it is true, was rendered vain by the presence of this imposing force ; but it could not silence the tongue of its imprudent mullick, who, exasperated at what he deemed the extortion of his unwelcome visitors, was foolish enough to launch out into invective against themselves and their master. The Koords bore it for a while ; but getting impatient at his continued insolence, began first to return the abuse and then to ill-treat him. His ryots took part with their master, and

a scuffle ensued, in which a few on both sides were hurt; and the soldiers, enraged beyond all bounds, in spite of the remonstrances of their officers, rushed fiercely on the peasants, drove them back into the village, and set it on fire.

The greater number, recalled to their senses at sight of the flames, retreated and stood viewing their progress in silence, and probably in some alarm for the consequences of their rashness; but a few, more hardened and reckless than the rest, followed up their unsoldierlike violence by plundering some of the houses; and seizing the women who ran distractedly about, made them the victims of their brutality under the very eyes of their comrades and of their officers, who made no effectual effort at least to restrain them. The conduct of these men was strongly contrasted by that of some fifteen or twenty of the party, who not only took no part in the outrage, but from the first remonstrated with their companions on their outrageous behaviour, and did all they could to check their criminal excesses. They succeeded in rescuing the wife and daughter of the mullick, with others of the women of the village; and afterwards protected that person from the fury of their comrades, who, alarmed at the consequences of their outrages, were strongly disposed to prevent all complaint by putting them to death.

So flagrant a breach of discipline could hardly have failed of reaching the watchful ear of his majesty, had it even been possible to prevent the surviving sufferers from preferring their complaint against the culprits. But the shah's love of justice and strict subordination, was too well known to render such concealment possible. Almost as soon as the return of the party was reported to his majesty, the injured mullick appeared at the durkhaneh, solicited an audience, and related his tale, supporting it by undeniable evidence. That very evening the whole troop was ordered to muster, and repair to the presence ; where Nadir appeared seated on his throne, and wearing on his brow the terrible frown which indicated to all who knew him that displeasure was in his soul, and that blood would surely flow.

The deepest silence reigned among the multitude around, and not a sound broke the awful stillness, until at length the mullick and his people being brought forward, he ordered the culprits to his presence. "Where," demanded he, "are these valiant heroes, who, despising alike the anger of their master and the laws of his service, turn against helpless women and white-bearded men the arms which they should wield only at his command?"— "Kibleh Allum ! centre of the 'universe !'" replied the airuz-beggee, with an humble obeisance, "be-

hold the men !” and he pointed to risaleh, which, now fully accoutred and led by their officers, marched into the presence.

Another pause of awful stillness prevailed, until the spell was broken by the deep voice of the king, in tones so distinct and clear, that though scarcely elevated above the pitch of common conversation, they were heard in the remotest parts of the assembly.

“ The monarch who shuts his ears to the cry of his people, and deals out stinted justice, even should his own son be its victim, does not deserve to reign. Miscreants ! ye have done well, have ye not, thus to blacken the face of your king in the eyes of ignorant ryots,—half civilised peasants, by a conduct which would disgrace the savage lesshees of Daghestan, or the Kaffers of yonder inaccessible mountains ? Who are ye then, dogs ! that, making yourselves drunk with the cup of insolence, have thus dared to fling from your neck the yoke of lawful subordination, and to stretch forth the arm of pillage and violence, when the king has said ‘ refrain ?’—But ye shall learn, and the whole host shall learn, that Nadir’s commands are the decrees of fate ; and woe be to those who shall neglect or disobey them !

“ Sudeval ! to thee was committed the charge of these daring wretches by thy superior officer, who confided, unguardedly as it appears, in thy conduct and discretion :—hast thou ought to say

for thyself?—Nadir condemns not unheard—the shah awaits thy reply.”—“Shadow of the universe!—protector of the destitute!” hesitated the young man, trembling and confused beneath the frown of his king, “what shall thy slave reply? He strove to maintain order and discipline, but his efforts were in vain; had he given his life to stay the fury of these turbulent men, it would not have availed”—“*Thy* life, sayest thou? A mighty sacrifice!—Silence, shameless! if thou hast nought more to the purpose to say.—Of what value then is thy paltry life but to be spent in discharge of thy duty? But it seems thou thinkest otherwise; and it is fit thou and others should be taught their duty. Attend! Through thy cowardice, thy neglect, or wilful insubordination, the shah’s commands have been broken, and the shah’s interest has suffered. Let thy fate be a warning to all who witness it; and let them learn to cultivate fidelity, intrepidity, and zeal.”

The unfortunate young Sudeval made a single effort to speak; but the king’s mood was too well known, and how bootless all remonstrance was after sentence had once been passed. In an instant he recovered his calmness; and as if he sought by firmness at this trying moment to wipe off all reproach of the fault for which he was to die, he turned with a steady countenance to the executioners, who now at the king’s signal ad-

vanced to lay hold on him, and walked firmly between them to the fatal mortar, which stood already prepared in the square before the royal pavilion. Laying his breast against the deadly engine's mouth, he gazed around him with steady eye, and permitted the ministers of the royal will to bind, according to custom, his arms on either side. But when they proceeded to cover his head with the shawl taken from his waist, he stopped them :—" Cover not my eyes," said he ; " they will not shrink.—The shah—may his name be fortunate!—has called me coward : let him see how a coward can look upon death!" Nor did they in truth wink, even as the fatal match approached.

When the dense white cloud of smoke had dispersed, no trace of the luckless young Sudeval remained, except some scattered rags and two scorched and blackened arms, which hung quivering from either side the instrument of death.

No sooner was the execution of their officer at an end than the men of the risaleh were stripped of their accoutrements by the hands of the furoshes, and one after another being held, were ripped open by the executioner's knife, until the whole of them, to the number of eighty wretches, lay writhing in their blood, and dying at the feet of their stern judge.

Should it be asked whether these bloody scenes and frequent cruelties did not tend to disgust the

soldiers and wean them from their loyalty to their king and leader, I can reply with confidence that such was far from being the case. Nadir, deeply skilled in the heart of man, well knew the stuff he had to deal with. Inured from their youth to bloodshed and slaughter, the duty he gave them to perform had by no means tended to soften their hearts or unnerve the minds of his soldiers ; and it was only by the use of the promptest and most rigorous measures that he could hope to overawe and control their lawless and turbulent spirits. On men for ever employed in acts of violence the sight of a comrade mangled by the knife of the executioner, produced scarce so powerful an effect as the milder punishments of more lenient governments, on the minds of persons less accustomed to blood. Besides, the whole army knew by experience, that if Nadir could punish severely, he could reward nobly ;—his justice was unimpeachable, and merit was as certain of countenance and protection, as guilt was of retributive punishment. Such was the case in the instance in which I have just related ; for immediately after the evildoers had met their doom, those few who, notwithstanding the taunts and abuse of their comrades, had exerted themselves to allay the tumult and to save their victims, were commanded to stand forth ; and after due commendation from the lips of the shah himself, such among them as were qualified,

received immediate promotion, and the rest were nobly rewarded with money or arms, or other appropriate indulgences. Such were the means by which Nadir maintained that rigid discipline which was the soul of his military strength, and the chief source of his mighty power.

But the operations of his majesty at this time were not confined to the organization of his military establishment : the ceremonial of his durbar, and the arrangements of his domestic economy, which had hitherto been remarkable rather for their simplicity than for their pomp, underwent an important change. There can be little doubt that these measures had their origin in policy ;—that aware of the importance of producing striking and favourable impressions upon a strange people accustomed to great splendour and magnificence, he deemed it expedient to make his first appearance among them in the style fitting to a monarch, who, having subdued great part of Asia, resolved now to attempt another and still richer conquest. And well in truth did Nadir know how to blend in his own person the attributes of a stern conqueror with the gracious aspect of a powerful and magnificent sovereign.

His public audiences, which, as usual, were given every morning and evening, were now distinguished by more than common pomp. Seated upon a throne of rich design the domed canopy

of which was covered with pure gold, and arrayed in the glittering and luxurious dress of an Indian prince, he listened to the petitions of his people and transacted the public business. On either side the throne, his ministers and officers of state, dressed in gorgeous robes, stood silent and motionless, awaiting, with downcast eyes and arms crossed before them, the august orders of their monarch: while the airuz-beggee, or principal lord in waiting, stood forward ready to receive and prefer petitions and to publish the awards of justice. Five hundred young slaves, selected for their surpassing beauty, and richly attired, were disposed in front in two companies, glowing like beds of flowers in spring; and a thousand youths whose cheeks still blushed under the soft down of approaching manhood, clad in uniforms of scarlet and gold, and bearing banners of crimson silk upon lances of which the points, the tassels, and the fringes were of solid silver, formed a lane through which this brilliant spectacle greeted the eye. The chosen guards of the royal person in splendid armour were drawn up around to keep treason and danger at a distance from the throne. The whole array was dazzling as the court of Solomon the Magnificent, or the fairy palaces of Ginestan.

But as the judgment-seat of Allah is girt with the terrors as well as the splendors of Omnipo-

tence, so the throne of his vicegerent upon earth was furnished with its symbols of punishment and its instruments of wrath ; for at a further distance, in their appointed places on either side, might be seen the nassakchees and furoshes, ministers of his justice, all clad in their appropriate uniform, armed with the terrible weapons of their office, still and motionless in the august presence, but ready at the slightest signal to start forward and execute its will.

A like degree of pomp was assumed upon the march and in the field ; but although the ceremonial observed on these occasions was in some measure formed upon the Indian model, a greater contrast cannot be imagined than that which existed between the clamorous, glittering, inefficiency of an Indian army, and the combination of splendour and of power which characterised the military array of Persia. A thousand chaooshes in the royal uniform and splendidly armed, preceded the monarch's person on the march ; publishing to the world his mighty name and titles, shouting out prayers for his prosperity, and proclaiming that "victory, and honour, and glory, attend the steps of the king of kings." An equal number of jeloodars clothed in vests of scarlet cloth girt round their waists with shawls of Casamere, alighted by troops in turns and ran on foot on either side his person ; and a chosen body of his most trusty gholaums, glittering

in their chain or plate armour, and mounted upon horses of the blood of Arabia or Toorkestaun, were disposed in corps around his person, and both in front and rear of his household.

His harem—the sacred and unapproachable—was guarded by troops of armed eunuchs and furoshes, supported at proper distances by other parties of gholaums, who were enjoined to shoot without mercy any unhappy wretch who might wander near the garden of inexhaustible delights, belonging to the Shadow of the Universe. The vicinity of this forbidden ground was easily to be recognised, even at a great distance, by the number of crimson kajawahs and tuchterowans,* with their multitude of little flags and glittering points, as well as from the voices of the female minstrels, which often might be heard as they sang and played on their instruments, to soothe the spirits and cheer the mood of his majesty, when, as was frequently his pleasure, he marched in koork,—that is “prohibition;” at which times no one dared to approach the royal presence.

The adoption of a style so novel, and a ceremonial so assuming, could scarce be effected without increasing, in a more or less degree, the distance between the shah and his old faithful servants, and

* Kajawahs are a sort of covered basket, two of which are hung across the back of a camel for the convenience of travellers.—Tuchterowan is a litter carried by mules.

consequently occasioning a corresponding proportion of disappointment and disgust. And doubtless many did feel the change, although few, if any, had the courage to declare it; but so well did these dignities sit upon the monarch, and so perfectly did he understand how to sweeten the unpalatable draught of decreased familiarity,—to some with occasional well-timed sprinklings of condescension and flattery,—to others by proofs of real kindness and sincere friendship,—that upon the whole the new fashion wore well; and what with the bustling and active life which every servant of his majesty led in the course of duty, and which forced them frequently into familiar contact with his person; the daily varieties of service; the glittering pageants which amused the eye; the high state of excitement in which men's minds were for ever maintained; and the valuable presents that were judiciously distributed, discontent, if it existed, found little opportunity of making its appearance.

In justice to the shah, however, it must be admitted that to old friends whom he valued, and trusty servants whom he esteemed, his manner never altered. In all the pomp he assumed, and even in the height of his prosperity, to them he was always kind, frank, and affable; nay, even familiar. Dost Allee Beg Tymoonee was a petty chief residing near Serukhs, who in the early

period of Nadir's life had more than once befriended him, and on one occasion in particular, when pursued by a Toorkoman Sooltaun, whose anger he had incurred, Dost Allee had given him a horse, and lent him ten armed riders as a protection to see him to Dereguz. This chieftain, when the shah after his coronation received the oaths of allegiance from his subjects at Mushed, then an old man with a failing memory, came with others to kiss the dust at the foot of the throne ; and forgetting entirely an event so common to these stormy days, he appeared in the presence with the humblest demeanor, and preferred no claim to notice. But the monarch's memory was more perfect : immediately recollecting his old benefactor, he ordered the airuz-beggee to conduct him to the spot where the principal officers of state were standing, nearest his person :—"Father," said he, "you are very welcome to your son Nadir : he has not forgotten your kindness to a hot-headed youth, and hopes you will enable the king to pay the debt of Nadir Koolee :—say, what favour can he bestow upon you ?"—"May God increase your majesty's prosperity !" stammered the old man, in some amazement as well as confusion ; "your servant is aged and requires no favour but protection. But, your majesty—Nadir Koolee ?—ah ! he was a wild young fellow, but a brave lad for all that ;—I know not what has become of him." The gravity of

Nadir was almost overcome, and even his officers could scarce preserve a steady countenance at the old chief's confusion : " Ay, my lords, ye may look and ye may smile ; but had it not been for this old man, perhaps neither shah nor omrahs might have been here this day. Respect his loyalty, and do him honour." The old man received a complete dress of honour, and was afterwards introduced to the royal khelwut, when the king embracing him, made him remain and partake of his own repast. He was dismissed with presents to his district, in the government of which he was confirmed ; and for the short remainder of his life he enjoyed the unceasing influence of the royal favour.

Even the meanest of his early friends were neither forgotten nor neglected by his majesty ; indeed the faculty of fixing the name and character, as well as the person of individuals whom he once had seen, upon his memory, was one of the most striking of the king's peculiarities. Of this faculty as well as of his grateful acknowledgement of benefits once received, the following anecdote may serve as an instance.—In the course of those struggles and fluctuations of fortune which marked the opening of Nadir's eventful career, while endeavouring to make head with a small party of Affshars against a marauding party of Koords, who had attempted to carry off the cattle of the village, the future monarch of Persia was not only worsted,

but received so severe a beating from the robbers, that he lay for some time apparently lifeless upon the spot where he fell. A poor camel-driver happening to pass by the place just as life and motion began to return, was attracted by his groans ; and moved with compassion, raised him up, and placing him in an empty kajawah, carried him to the next village, and had him nursed and attended for some days, until he was able to move ; when, desirous to quit the country for a while, he took the sarwan's offer, and accompanied him to Nishapoore. He had little means in his power of repaying the kindness of his benefactor at the time, and it was long ere he had an opportunity of doing so : but many years after, when the glory and power of Nadir was fast increasing, it happened that he was preparing for a certain expedition ; and while himself examining the means provided for carrying the baggage, he was struck by hearing a voice which he recognised, remonstrating against the hardship of having his camels pressed for service. The face of the speaker confirmed his suspicions : it was his old friend Allee NuCEEKEE sarwan of Sooltan Maidaun, whose camels had been seized among others, for the exigences of the army. He made no remark at the moment, but ordered the camel-driver to be taken into custody, and brought before him at his evening durbar.

The man, who remembered his imprudent and

abusive expostulations, was smitten with terror, and appeared trembling before his former guest, of whose person he had not the slightest recollection ; nor did the first expressions he heard contribute to compose him. " How now, fellow ?" said Nadir ; " we hear that thou art abusive, and dost grumble that thy beast should serve the state, and thou thyself shouldst eat its salt :—is this the case ?" — " May it please your highness to excuse your servant !" stammered the trembling sarwan : " these camels are all I possess ; they are hired to perform a certain journey ; and if I lose them, or even their hire, my family must starve." — " Hoh ! so may any obstinate ghorumsaug say, who chooses to resist the commands of his rulers. But this cannot be suffered : thou hast committed a fault, and must pay the penalty." — " May God protect your highness ! have mercy on a poor wretch !" — " Ay, this is always the way : but come, have you no one to step forward in your behalf ?" — " No, your highness ! God help me,— I have no friend here." — " Stay—bethink you ! remember you the village of Soormeit, and the watering-place of Ak-tuppeh ?" — " Ay, your highness, I do so, well." — " Hast thou forgotten a wounded stranger whom thou didst find there and assist ?" — " Holy Prophet ! no : I remember him well ; but he,—Heaven knows where he may

be—"—" Softly, friend ; he may be nearer than you think for: couldst thou recall his voice ?—would his features be strange to thee ?"

While he spoke thus Nadir undoing the brounee which was wrapt around him as he sat, and suddenly exchanging the Kuzzilbash turban which he wore for a rough cap of black wool, stood up before the bewildered camel-driver, in the brown camels'-hair cloak, which in these days he had worn. The man, startled at his sudden action, mechanically turned, and would have ran from the presence, had he not been withheld by those around him ; and recalled to himself by the voice of Nadir, which kindly said, " Turn, Allee Nuckee !—behold ! dost thou now remember him ?" —" Allah-il-ullah ! what wonder is this ? it is himself !—forgive ! forgive !" and he dropt in an attitude of supplication. " Old friend !" continued Nadir, " there is nothing to forgive, but much to be grateful for to thee ; and Nadir Koolee will pay his debts of gratitude : it is his turn now to be kind and benevolent : fear not that thy family shall ever starve." But Nadir had ever discretion in his liberality : he was a quick reader of character, and saw at a glance that his friend the sarwan was best suited to the station in which fortune had placed him ; so in that line he promoted him, making him one of the chief jeloo-

dars of the baggage cattle, an office of considerable emolument, and which the man continued to discharge with zeal and fidelity.

But though generous and condescending to humble merit and tried devotion, he could never brook presumption, whatever might be its claims, nor endure to have undue advantage taken of his condescension and occasional familiarity. Yet there were some about his person whose vanity betrayed them into imprudences of this nature, for which they seldom failed to suffer. It was such a piece of impertinent folly that cost Jaffer Beg Khan Jaloyer no less than his life; for, presuming on the notice he had obtained from his royal master, by a shrewdness of observation and ready wit, exhibited at the private parties to which he had the honour to be admitted, the senseless fellow had the temerity to lift up his voice in full durbar, and tender his opinion unasked on the subject of a proclamation connected with certain political arrangements of state. The countenance of the king darkened as he spoke, and the impudent wretch cowered under his frown. "Now curses light upon thee for a meddling fool, who is not worth the air he eats! who knows not when to speak in season, and has not sense enough to distinguish between Nadir Koolee and Nadir Shah!"

—Our royal name will be polluted by his unseemly conversation. But that must be prevented:—away with him there!—let his mouth be stopped by the bow-string!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INDIAN CAMP.

WHILE the shah, aided by his principal officers, was occupied at Peshawur, with the arrangements I have just adverted to, the whole court, and the army in particular, was thrown into deep affliction by the receipt of evil tidings from Persia. The Leshees of Daghestan had again thrown off the yoke of obedience ; and Ibrahim Khan Zohir-u-doulut, the august and gallant brother of his majesty, the chief pillar of the state, had been killed while engaged in reducing them to subjection. Carried on by the impetuous fire of his own valour, he advanced too far into a dark woody defile, in pursuit of the flying enemy ; and being marked by traitors concealed behind the trees, he drank the sweet sherbet of martyrdom, and quitted this sinful world for the joys of Paradise. A disaster so unexpected and so fatal cast a gloom over the whole camp in spite of our success and

proud anticipations. It seemed ominous to the prosperity and glory of the kingdom. Intrepid, loyal, and enthusiastic, who was there like Ibrahim to lead the armies and fight the battles of his country? Noble, yet simple in his habits, ardent and warm-hearted, who could so well win the soldier's heart, cheer him on in hardship or in danger, stimulate him to daring exploits, or plead his cause when required with a stern commander? Frank, faithful, and generous, where was there such a friend or patron?—Who in the wide borders of Iraun could be compared with Ibrahim Khan?

Painful to every one as were the tidings of his loss, to none were they fraught with more poignancy than to me. He was my first friend, my steadiest benefactor. It was he who warmed into life by the beams of his gracious favour the destitute and unprotected Ismael. Long and bitterly did I grieve for him: and never while that life shall endure will the memory of his noble patron wax faint in his heart!

At length we quitted Peshawur; and such was the terror of the Persian arms, and the admirahle policy of their mighty leader, that not only did they meet with no considerable obstruction in their progress to the attack; but even when they reached that river, no opposition of consequence was made to their constructing a bridge over its

rapid stream ; so that the passage of the whole army was effected without either difficulty or loss.

It would be difficult to convey an adequate notion of the impressions made upon us Persians by the novel character of the scenery and various objects that presented themselves to our notice, from the moment we crossed the Attock, and entered fairly the confines of Hindostan. It is true that a gradual change in the aspect of the country and the productions of its soil, as well as in the manners and appearance of its inhabitants, had been perceived during the march from Jelallabad to Peshawur, and from thence to the Attock. But so soon as we had crossed that river, and set foot on the rich soubahdaree of Lahore, the change became complete and striking in the extreme.

The richly-wooded country, intermingled with vast tracts of fine cultivation ; the succession of innumerable towns and villages, with their various picturesque pagodas and temples of pagan worship ; the dark complexions of the peasantry, rendered more conspicuous by the loose drapery of their costume, which even at that cold season afforded but an imperfect covering either for limbs or body ; the rich apparel, and indolent luxurious manners of the higher orders, wrapped up in their muslins and shawls, and splendid brocaded keen-khabs and silks ; the brilliant colours of the women's dresses ; who, far less scrupulous than the

females of strict Mahomedan lands, make comparatively little use of the veil ; and who throw their draped garments, their sarees, and doputtas, of various hue, and edged and fringed with ornaments as gay, in every graceful fold that can be imagined ; leaving their beautiful, delicate, though somewhat tawny features, to the partial gaze of all who pass : these, and a thousand other peculiarities proclaimed to the hardy and warlike soldiers of Iraun that they had now reached a new and richer region, inhabited by a weaker and more effeminate race than any with which their arms had hitherto coped. Unhappily there was no time permitted to satisfy a newly awakened curiosity, to indulge in the peaceful contemplation of these rare beauties, or to cultivate mild and friendly intercourse. The conciliatory policy which Nadir had practised in Affghanistan was no longer required ; it terminated with the passage of the Attock ; and our path now became like the course of the Seemoom, swift, resistless, desolating—marked by blood and carnage. Wherever our troops made their appearance villages were deserted, and property abandoned by its owners ; for the soldiers, freed from the restraints of that rigid discipline which had for some time interfered with their habits, gave a loose to the fierce licentiousness of their nature, and glutted themselves with blood, and pillage, and rapine.

The spectacle of so fair a country converted at once into a tenantless and fire-scarched desert, covered with the smouldering ruins of its towns and villages, and thick strewn with the bloody corses of men, women, and children, murdered on their smoking hearths, or while vainly clinging round their helpless idols, moved even the iron natures of those officers who were least actively engaged in the work of extermination. The soldiers themselves, in the satiety of their brutal excess, were even heard to murmur at the effects of their own capricious reckless cruelty. But the rapidity of our progress admitted not either of repentance or reflection. New temptations stimulated to fresh atrocities, until the career of murder and destruction was temporarily arrested by the vicinity of the enemy.

It was upon our arrival at Sirhind, on the 8th day of February, that the first correct intelligence regarding the progress of the Indian army reached the camp. It was known indeed that a mighty host had for a long time past been assembling in the vicinity of Dehlee, under the principal leaders of the empire; but of its operations or movements nothing very distinct had been ascertained, or at least publicly talked of until now, when we learned that Mahomed Shah Padshah, having at length been roused from his extraordinary supineness, had left his capital, and heading his army (the numbers

of which exceeded, it was said, the sands of the desert and the stars of heaven), had marched to Kurnaul, a town upon the banks of the river Jumna, where he had encamped and intrenched himself, with the resolution of awaiting the approach of the army of Iraun.

Upon receipt of this information, immediate preparations were made to meet with this mighty host, or to attack it, as opportunity might serve, in its intrenchments ; and forty thousand horsemen, with double that number of equally well-armed attendants, all as capable of a soldier's duty as the more regular troops, and mounted on camels, mules, or yaboos, together with a fitting train of camel and field artillery, were selected to proceed in advance with his majesty ; while the remaining part of the army was left behind to occupy various stations between Sirhind and Tanesir.

On the 13th of February, after reaching Azeemabad, the castle of which surrendered after a foolish show of resistance, the first rencontre occurred between the reconnoitring parties of our army and some stragglers from the imperial camp. A troop of about an hundred Koordish horsemen picking their way through a thin dhák jungle which surrounded the cultivation of a village in its vicinity, burst suddenly upon some hundreds of irregular horse, grass-cutters, and grooms, who had wandered from the lines in quest of forage ; an

article which even at that early period had become scarce in the Indian bazars. These fellows, terrified at the fierce appearance of our men, who, to say the truth, with their rough fur caps and sheep-skin lined cloaks girt over their arms and military costume, the swarthy look of men, dress, and arms, with their huge darkly-harnessed horses, presented objects so grim and truculent, so completely opposed to the light, gay-coloured garb and brilliant furnishing of the slender Indians, that it was not be wondered at if, ignorant of the number of their strange assailants, they took to flight, spreading far and near an alarm of “the Kuzzilbashes.”

The Koords followed them, and in sheer wantonness cut and trampled down to right and left both the horsemen and the defenceless grooms; and pursued them so far, that ere they were aware of it, a broad plain opened out before them, covered with people, and displaying the wide-spread camp of the Indians. This sent them in their turn to the right-about; and they rode back to head-quarters with a marvellous account of the numbers and brilliant appearance of the host we were about to encounter. Such reports, however, so far from tending to abate, served rather to increase the ardour which was felt by every one among us to meet the Indian army. In fact, so trivial had been the resistance we had met

with from any force since we entered the country, that the meanest groom in our army believed himself a full match for a dozen of these Indians, if he should be lucky enough to have so many fall to his share to plunder.

Next day the shah having taken up a position somewhat further removed from the enemy's lines, in order to secure a better supply of water for the camp, determined himself personally to reconnoitre the imperial position, attended by some of his principal officers. I had the honour to attend the royal footsteps upon this occasion ; and many as were the armies I had seen before that day, I never can forget the glorious sight which that encampment presented, when, after toiling through a dense and tangled jungle which bordered the plain on every side, it first burst upon our view.

Inclosing a space of more than ten miles in circuit, it was defended by batteries on every side, connected by pallisadoed lines, bristling, as we were afterwards assured, with five thousand pieces of artillery. In the centre of this gigantic intrenchment arose the imperial pavilions, comprising in themselves a superb city of canvass, glittering with crimson and gold. Around them fluttered hundreds of flags and streamers from gold-tipt spears and lofty cullices. Before the centre pavilion, on lofty gilded poles, floated the sacred banners of green silk, bearing in their field the golden sun. Others also

of crimson and gold flung their broad fields to the sunshine ; and there too were borne aloft the golden fish, the favourite emblem of Indian royalty, with other devices too numerous and dazzling to be distinguished. A wide and lofty wall of crimson serpurdehs shrouded all that passed within from profane eyes.

Around the imperial quarters and scattered in the various divisions of the camp, towered in snow-white piles the thousand tents of his omrahs. There were the quarters of Nizam-ul-Moolk, marked by the distinguishing ensigns of the Deccan ; far on the left rose the gilded fish of Saadut Khan of Oude ; —Khandoran, Mouzuffer Khan, Zemaun Khan, Sirbulund Khan, Azimoollak Khan, with an hundred more soubahdars and nawabs, the great and the noble, the pillars of the state, and the swords of war, were there, the tents of each marked by his own ensigns ; and endless was the flutter of flags and pennons, the glitter of lance points, and all the brilliant pomp of a most royal equipage. These, with the confused ocean of smaller tents, do-chobehs, ek-chobehs, routies, semianehs, and palls, which sheltered the inferior officers, the soldiers, and all the host of attendants, might be seen rising above the intrenched lines of the camp.

But the multitudes which inhabited these temporary abodes did not confine themselves to the

intrenched space in which their dwellings stood ; for the whole plain in their front was teeming with countless myriads of men and animals, glittering and dazzling the eye like insects in the summer evening's sun. Distant as prudence kept us from the place, at first we could distinguish little more than general motion in the crowd, and a play of colour and of lustre like the changeful beauty of a bed of tulips agitated by the wind ; and in truth I could compare the rich variety of hue exhibited in the attire of these Indians to nothing so aptly as to the splendid blow of vernal blossoms, which the showers of spring call forth from the fields of my native Iraun, where not a foot falls upon the soil without crushing a thousand flowers. Gay and various like these did the vision flit before our eyes : troops of horsemen, all in their fluttering garments, darting forward in full career, then stopping in a moment, and wheeling and winding in an hundred different ways, describing as many intricate figures on the sand as there were individuals in the company : hundreds of omrahs, with their party-coloured retinues, gathering in front and rear of their lords, like clusters of lilies and hyacinths attending the rose, flitted along in all directions : numberless mighty elephants, attired in trappings of green and silver, or of crimson and gold, like lofty mountains reflecting back

the hues of the evening sun, raised their glittering howdahs high above the crowd : crimson-canopied palankeens with rich embroidery of gold and silver, borne by their train of sable and girded bearers, darted here and there with a swiftness altogether surprising : troops of dancing women attending on the great men of the camp tripped along with their tinsel robes, their mincing gait, and voluptuous gestures. These and a thousand other glittering objects, half seen, half lost in the bright uncertainty of incessant motion, and sparkling in the beams of a brilliant sun, formed a scene of fairy pomp and ideal magnificence which not the wildest enthusiast among us had imagined even in his dreams : it even forced an exclamation of gratified surprise from the lips of the shah himself. "By the soul of the king, it is a gallant sight!" exclaimed he, after looking for some minutes on the busy pageant. "What think you, Cossim Beg? what sayest thou, Thahmaseb Khan? Do they not show bravely? Have we not here a rich reward for my brave Kuzzilbashes after their toils? and, praise be to Allah! they are ours as surely as yon sun shines in heaven."—"The words of the king are the decrees of destiny," replied Thahmaseb Khan, with a grim smile; "the feathers of these gay birds are worth plucking, were it only to patch up our own tarnished plumage; and in truth they seem to your slave to

hang so loose upon their carcasses, that it would not be hard to make them cast them."—" By the head of the shah," observed Cossim Beg Khan, " there seems to be something more solid there than plumage ; no lack of gold and silver to line our pockets and gild our harness. Allah-il-ullah ! see how they frisk and curvet, as thoughtlessly as if there was not a single Kuzzilbash on this side the Attock."—" It is well," said the king ; " let them dream out their dream—they may awaken to a different game. The star of Nadir is high in the firmament ; God has given them into his hands. On, on, to the right !"

We continued our observations until, after making the circuit of great part of the imperial position in cutting through a patch of jungle which stretched from the main forest towards the intrenchments, we suddenly issued out into an open space, full in view, and almost within range of the guns of the batteries. A few stragglers observing our foreign appearance, rode up to discover who we might be, which they were suffered to do unmolested ; but after approaching near enough to be undeceived, they set up a loud yell, and turning short round, scampered off, shouting " Kuzzilbash ayeh hyn ! Kuzzilbash ayeh hyn ! " * to alarm their companions.

* The Kuzzibishes are come.

The moment this cry was heard, and a glimpse of our party obtained, a buzz arose on the plain like the hum of a swarm of bees. All the gay figures that were skimming about upon its surface now hurried helter-skelter to the entrance of the place: they even scrambled over the intrenchments in their eagerness to get under shelter from they knew not well what danger; and a dropping irregular fire soon commenced from the batteries, intended for us; but so ill-directed, that many of the shot did mischief among their own people. In the midst of this confusion the shah and all our party rode quietly off, and returned to camp.

This reconnoitering expedition took place upon the morning of February the 14th. On the same evening, advices having reached his majesty that Saadut Khan, soubahdar of Oude, one of the most distinguished and bravest nobles of the empire, had reached Paneeput with a large reinforcement of troops and stores, he detached Hadjee Beg Khan with five thousand Koords to intercept this supply, or at least to retard its progress until an additional force should, if required, arrive to his aid. The information, however, came too late; for Saadut Khan, with the greater part of his escort, reached the imperial camp, unmolested, on the morning of the 16th; and Hadjee Beg Khan succeeded only in overtaking a part of the bag-

gage and followers, whom he attacked and dispersed, pursuing some of the fugitives up to the very quarters of Khandouran, part of whose tents were pitched without the intrenchments.

Saadut Khan, who had just discovered the unprovided state of the imperial camp, and its unfitness either to stand a blockade or remain inactive, had repaired to the royal quarters immediately on his arrival, and was in the act, as we afterwards learned, of representing to the Padshah and his vizier Nizam-ul-Mookl the expediency of giving battle to the Persian army before its whole strength should be collected against the Indian camp, when a messenger entered to inform him of the attack made upon his followers. "This decides the matter," said he to the minister: "let all who intend to do their duty to the king, and save their own honour, follow me." With these words he made his way to his elephant, which was in waiting, and summoning his troops, who had not yet laid aside their arms, he hastened to the point of attack. Here he found the Koords, who had killed or dispersed his own people, busy plundering the quarters of Khandouran; and fatigued as both horses and men were by the forced marches of two nights, he succeeded in driving them back.

In the mean time the expediency of recalling Saadut Khan, or of hazarding a general action by ordering out troops to support him, was hotly

debated in the emperor's durbar, which had been hurriedly assembled on the occasion. Nizam-ul-Moolk, reluctant to proceed to extremities, represented that Saadut Khan's troops, being fatigued with their march, would be better able to fight after a day's rest ; and that orders for his recall to camp should instantly be sent. But Khandouran observed, in reply to this, that Saadut Khan was by that time doubtless engaged with the enemy ; and so far from being able to withdraw, might not be able to extricate his own troops without aid. At length, stimulated probably by the soubahdar's example, and ashamed to be outdone by him, he exclaimed, " that their honour would be irretrievably lost were they to suffer a brave and faithful servant of the state, and who must now be in action with its foes, to be overpowered or remain unassisted. Let others do as they please," added he, " I will go and support Saadut Kan."

The day by that time was considerably spent ; but, followed by his two sons and the troops under his own command, with some light pieces of artillery, Khandouran hastened to the scene of action, and took up his position on the left of Saadut Khan. His example excited the slumbering courage of others among the omrahs ; and Mouzuffer Khan, Zemaun Khan, Seyed Hussun Khan, with others, amounting to more than twenty of the best and bravest, mustering their

own troops, repaired to the field of battle, and swelled the number of the combatants.

But by the time that Khandouran reached his ground an important change had occurred on the face of the field.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BATTLE.

WHEN his majesty became acquainted with the return of the Koords, and their skirmish with the followers of Saadut Khan ; although at that time he had by no means decided upon coming immediately to a general action, he thought fit to order out a reinforcement of fresh troops to support them. A thousand mounted musketeers were therefore despatched to oppose the troops of Saadut Khan as they issued from the camp. But when Khandouran also made his appearance, half of that body were forced to show front to that leader ; so that the whole had enough upon their hands.

In the mean time a thousand fresh Koords, with a like number of Kadgers and of Buchtiarees, were thrown forward into the jungle intervening between Khandouran's position and the new one which our troops had occupied that very morning. The

orders of their leaders were to hold themselves concealed among the jungle until a signal for appearing should be given. Of these leaders I had the honour to be one ; the command of the Buchtiarees was given to me, and I had permission to take with me a chosen troop of my own particular corps of gholaums. With this force I ensconced myself in the brushwood, awaiting the appearance of three red banners reared above the wood, which was to be the signal for charging.

The roar of the battle came thick upon our ears as we approached our place of concealment ; and the sustained roll of musketry, with its rising cloud of white smoke in the direction of the imperial camp, proved that as yet each party maintained their ground. But in spite of the rattle of the successive discharges, we could distinguish the hum of the busy multitude, mustering, as it seemed, to an endless extent upon our front and right. After some time the incessant roar of musketry and cannon became interrupted ; the sound of the discharges approached : by and by the trampling of horses could be distinguished in the intervals ; and at length the steel caps and red topped turbans of our Kuzzilbashes were seen above the copsewood, retreating towards us.

Both the men and horses of my party were by this time fretting with impatience, and I had difficulty in keeping them within bounds.

"Steady, men!" said I, in a low but decided tone: "be steady! Wait for the signal and the word; but have your feet in the stirrup, and mount in the moment you hear it." At that instant my eye caught the gleam of a crimson spot in our rear. "The ground must be examined," continued I. "Be cool, men; stir not, for your lives, but await my return." I mounted accordingly; and just as I had done so the three red flags were distinctly visible above the wood. Advancing a few rapid paces to look about me, I stood upon its verge, and, Allah! what a gallant, animating sight was there! Far as the eye could reach along the plain there stretched a dense and glittering line of men and horses, camels and elephants, enamelling the ground with all the brilliant hues of the rainbow, richly intermingled with white, with crimson, and with gold; and over them floated and quivered innumerable pennons and banners of every shape and colour, rising above a perfect hedge of sparkling spear points and polished matchlocks. Hundreds and hundreds of the mightiest of quadrupeds were there, crowned with their gilded howdahs, and their heads defended by shining bucklers, rearing their curling trunks aloft, and uttering the sharp shrill piping cry which denotes their terror or their rage. The eye was dazzled by the quick sparkling vibrations of the countless multitude; but so effeminate was their appearance, so totally

unlike that of soldiers, that their numbers produced no terrific effect.

It was very soon obvious that the left of their line, though agitated, did not advance. It was equally apparent that it watched with interest the operations of its right flank, where a scene of still greater excitement was proceeding. The ground there was thickly strewed with those who wore that gay and effeminate harness, among whom here and there might be distinguished the grim form of a Koordish soldier, with his dusky equipments. But thousands of the living Indians were sweeping at full speed over these tokens of the battle, in pursuit of our flying Kuzzilbashes. On bounded the fat pampered steeds, with their riders all fluttering and flaunting in the rich floating garments of Hindostan ; shawls waving, scarfs streaming, armour or brocade glistening in the sunbeams. Onwards at more measured pace pressed the elephants, showering arrows from their armed backs, and trampling on the dead and wounded. Fast onward came all, in the full assurance of victory ; for now the fierce and swarthy forms of the Kuzzilbashes were flying before them as chaff before the wind. Miserable wretches ! how they were deceived !

The glance of a few moments sufficed me to gather what it has taken some time to describe, and taught me all I required to know. "Now is

your time, men : mount !—onward !—charge !—open to the right and left ; receive our friends, then close and check the enemy. See !—the Kadgers are on them already !” Wild was their shout ; for well did they know the manœuvre which was to give their enemies to their tender mercies. The flying musketeers, who had retreated only to inveigle the Indians towards our ambush, halted in our rear, and wheeling on our right flank, whenever we had cleared the wood, once more advanced to the charge; while the enemy, under no command, carried on by his own impetuosity and weight, could neither halt nor get into order before he was met by the full shock of our charge. In vain was the check which brought the foremost horses upon their haunches : in vain the horsemanship of their riders, or their skilful use of spear and tulwar, in which the Indians do certainly excel; the rear-ranks overwhelmed those in front, and our scimitars had but to deal their blows upon a mass of living inextricable confusion. The Koords and Kadgers were equally successful in their attacks ; and the former taking the advancing masses in flank, dealt more sweeping destruction on its dense array with the light artillery which accompanied that detachment. His majesty meanwhile, whose quick military eye perceived at a glance the overwhelming advantage that was gained, supported it in a masterly manner, by throwing forward a body

of Affshar horse, which accompanied his own person, and which, being opposed to that large division of the Indian army, where the emperor and his minister Nizam-ul-Mook had taken their position, served to keep it in check, and thus permitted their friends on the left to complete their work.

But notwithstanding the fatal confusion into which the troops of Saadut Khan and Khandouran had fallen, these leaders fought on with undaunted bravery, and did every thing that personal example and exertion could effect to extricate themselves from the effects of their mistake. But the latter having received a mortal wound, and falling back upon his elephant, his followers no longer seeing their master, lost all courage, and fled from the field, plundering great part of his baggage on their way, and never again returned to camp. The fate of Saadut Khan, for the time at least, was less severe ; for while still surrounded by some brave and faithful troops, he continued to shower his arrows upon his assailants, he was recognised by a young soldier of Nishapoor of which city the khan himself was a native. The young man, desirous, if possible, to save the life of his countryman, in spite of the arrows which flew around him, approached and addressed him :—“ Ho, khan !—are you mad ? Against whom are you fighting ? and what troops have you to trust to ? Submit, and save your life !”—and while saying these words, he

threw himself from his horse, fastened it to his spear, which he stuck in the ground, sprung up by the ladder which hung at the side of the elephant, and drawing his dagger, held it instantly to the throat of Saadut Khan, while again he called on him to yield himself a prisoner. The success of this bold feat convinced the khan that fortune was entirely against him : he no longer resisted ; and accordingly was led off prisoner to the camp of the shah, who received him very graciously.

The battle was now at an end. The emperor did not think fit to interfere; and the destruction of that portion of the Indian army which had opposed us was only arrested by night, when the troops of Iraun, their arms weary, and their swords blunted with constant slaughter, retired at length, leaving upwards of seventeen thousand of their opponents dead upon the field : and, as the whole of this carnage was committed in less than three hours, and by a force not amounting to ten thousand men, some notion may be entertained of the deadly nature of the conflict, on one side at least.

Among those who fell this day, the court of Dehlee had to mourn the loss of many of her most distinguished nobles ; and of the twenty-two who followed Saadut Khan and Khandouran into the field, scarce one returned. But, in the last of these noblemen, the Ameer-ul-Omrah Khandouran, the emperor sustained the greatest and most fatal be-

reavement that could have befallen the state ; for whatever may have been his errors or his faults, there is little doubt that among the hundreds of servants who bowed before the throne of Mahomed, the Ameer-ul-Omrah left not his equal behind for gallantry in the field and fidelity to his master.

On the part of Iraun there were not a few who drunk the sherbet of death from the hands of their opponents ; nor did his majesty fail of losing the services of some tried and faithful officers, even of considerable rank ; but they were few in comparison to the numbers which had fallen in the ranks of our enemies. The real amount of our loss however was not publicly known ; for, during the night which succeeded the battle, pioneers were despatched to bury the body of every Iraunee that could be discovered. The Indians took no such precaution, and for a long time afterwards the putrefying carcasses of seventeen thousand men infected the air for many cos around. Such was the celebrated battle of Kurnaul, by which, trifling as were its apparent effects when compared with the forces on either side, the crown of India was lost to its hereditary sovereign, and thrown into the hands of a foreign though mighty invader.

The four next days succeeding the battle were spent by us inactively, to the no small disappointment of our soldiers, who longed to touch the rich

spoils which the camp of the enemy promised; nor did it seem unreasonable to suppose that the season of depression, after so severe a blow, was best suited for following up an attack so successfully commenced. But such did not appear to be the opinion of his majesty ; for, so far from authorising any attempt at plunder, strict orders were issued that every man should confine himself within the limits of our encampment; and not even a foraging party was suffered for some days to stir from camp. This remarkable moderation was reported to have its origin in the conciliatory councils of Saadut Khan, who, foreseeing advantage to himself in acting the part of a peaceful negotiator, made use of all his eloquence to persuade the state that the emperor must come to terms, and would pay largely to avoid further hostilities.

There were indeed sufficient grounds for believing that such would be the case. Consternation and doubt were reigning in the Indian camp. Multitudes of all ranks fled from it on the very night after the battle towards Dehlee, or sought shelter with their valuables in the strongholds of the rajahs nearest it. Of these, many were plundered and murdered by the way, not so much by our Kuzzilbashes as by the fierce unprincipled stragglers from their own camp, who, in deserting their duty, scrupled nothing at committing outrages

which they thought might fairly enough be laid at the door of their enemies.

In camp, the remaining omrahs held anxious and tumultuous council with the emperor in his pavilion until morning, when that prince, contrary to the expectation of his ministers, expressed an earnest desire to put his fortune to the chance of at least one more battle. But cowardice or treachery thwarted this more manly purpose ; and Nizam-ul-Moolk in particular, with all the appearance of zealous fidelity, represented to his majesty the unspeakable risk of such an alternative ; and besought him to have recourse to conciliatory measures, and to mollify, if possible, the stern invader by concession. In the mean time it was found expedient to contract the proud limits which had been marked out for the imperial encampment ; for so thin of soldiers had it become in a few hours after the battle, that when the emperor sent at midnight for Nizam-ul-Moolk, the space intervening between the tents of his majesty and that minister's quarters, exceeding a mile in extent, was found utterly deserted.

The succeeding two days, which had been spent by us in doubt and impatience, passed in fear and anxiety in the Indian camp. But, upon the morning of the third, a messenger was observed approaching the Persian camp ; and presently a

numerous procession of unarmed persons appeared, attended, as we understood, by Nizam-ul-Moolk himself, and Azim Allah Khan, another principal officer of the imperial court, who, after enjoying an audience of no less than six hours with the king of kings, returned in like manner to their own camp.

The result of these negotiations remained secret no longer than until the next morning, when, after the interchange of several expresses between the camps, Thahmaseb Khan was observed to set out, attended by a suitable train, from the presence of his majesty, who remained in his khelwut; and in a little time after the eyes of all the camp were attracted by the appearance of a troop of two hundred horsemen splendidly appointed, who issued from the imperial camp, escorting a pretty numerous assemblage, partly mounted and partly on foot, in the centre of which the royal canopy and umbrella rose conspicuously glittering in the sun.

In a moment every tent was in a bustle, pouring out its contents to witness the unlooked-for sight:—"The Padshah! the Padshah himself!"—the royal presence approaches," rung, in accents of eager amazement, from every mouth; and so high was the respect entertained among the people of Iraun for a king of the royal blood of Timour, that though our soldiers were eager for an opportunity of meeting him in combat, and plundering

him of his very empire, still, when he came thus as it were in peace and confidence among us, they gazed upon the weak and fallen monarch with an emotion of reverence and awe. It is true that these sentiments soon gave way to feelings of disappointment; for the troops became alarmed, lest so unlooked-for a concession in point of ceremony should be the precursor of arrangements which must entirely preclude their chance of plundering on the sweeping scale they anticipated. A slight murmur of discontent was even heard to arise from some of the most daring among the soldiery; but the royal commands were strictly enforced, and order was perfectly maintained. The troops mustered under arms, and their commanding officers were summoned to the presence, from whence his royal highness Nasser Ullah Meerza, in a splendid tuchterowan, and suitably attended, issued, and advanced to meet the emperor Mahomed Shah.

It was an august and touching spectacle to see these two exalted persons, who, but some days before, might have met in deadly combat, halt as they approached, and rising from their litters, embrace like friends and brothers, in full view of the assembled troops, who shouted at the sight: —then walking on, side by side, until they reached the barrier of cannon before the royal pavilion, beyond which no armed person was permitted to

pass, the emperor of Hindostan and the prince of Persia, attended only by a few eunuchs, proceeded to the entrance of the audience chamber. There he was met by the royal presence itself, which, like another beneficent sun, shed its radiant influence on that auspicious meeting. Beyond these precincts profane eyes were not permitted to penetrate; nor had I the good fortune to be present along with the other principal officers at this interesting scene; having been ordered on that very morning to take charge of a party detached for the purpose of foraging and bringing in a large convoy of provisions from the vicinity of Thanesir.

It was evening before I returned, and meeting with Hadjee Beg Khan, who had been all day in attendance on his majesty, became acquainted with what had occurred:—"And what is the result of this wonderful step on the part of the Padshah?" inquired I.—"What can I tell?" replied the khan.—"Our august monarch—on whose head be blessings!—threw away much good advice and sensible remarks upon a heedless ear, I fear. He took the trouble to recapitulate the affronts which the court of Persia had received from that of Dehlee; adverted to the disrespectful inattention, with which both letters and complaints had uniformly been treated; and pointed out very distinctly the consequences of the Pad-

shah's own effeminacy, pride, and indolence: But the ears which have for years been accustomed to the titillation of flattery, cannot brook the harsh sounds of plain uncompromising truth ; and it is whispered that the Padshah, not daring to give vent to his displeasure, preserved the sullen silence of anger and shame."—"But how is the matter to end ?" demanded I; "are our beards to be laughed at after this plaguy long march of ours? or are we, after all, to set eyes on the seat of the great king, the splendid Shah-jehanabad ?* Are we to have a taste of its pleasures and a pluck at its overflowing riches ?"—"Why, that is more than thy servant can tell : report says that a mighty peishcush† is to be received, as its ransom from plunder ;—a peishcush so large as will enable the shah to make us all rich ; and that Nizam-ul-Moolk has pledged himself for its being paid. I take it our Kuzzil-bashes would prefer helping themselves ; but they must wipe their mouths and content themselves ; the shah's pleasure must be done."—"Ay," rejoined I, "and the shah will deal with his faithful soldiers as a king should do. Have they not already tasted his bounty ? and have they not reason to expect the same liberality when its sources are augmented ?"—"All that may be," said Hadjee Beg Khan; "but my rough Koords

* Or Dehlee.

† Subsidy.

would rather take a tomaun and give a blow, than receive twice the sum in peace. The heart of a soldier is in plunder ; and I still hope he may not be balked. I am a true rough old Koord, and feel a little with my men, although I know how to check the rogues and make them do their duty :— but after all, who can say whether this compromise may hold ? The Padshah is as shy as a hunted gourkhur ; as capricious as a girl who has quarrelled with her lover : he may change his resolution a dozen times before morning yet.”

Nor was the hadjee far wrong ; for it appears that his imperial majesty when informed by his ministers of the terms proposed for an accommodation with the shah of Persia, sent hastily for Sirbulund Khan, Mahomed Bungush Khan, and others of his omrahs ; and declaring to them that the affairs of the empire were in so critical a condition as only to afford a choice of three courses, all almost equally desperate, he required them, on their allegiance, to advise him which of these alternatives they deemed it most proper for him to adopt. The three courses were ; either to muster his remaining troops, and marching out with them on the morrow to make a last bold attempt at retrieving his fortunes ; to terminate his dilemma and his life at once by a dose of poison ; or to submit without further opposition to the terms of the conqueror. These alternatives were

therefore gravely debated according to the commands of the emperor; but though the khans and omrahs, in obedience to his orders, held their troops and persons, like brave men, in readiness to support their master, in case he should resolve upon the most manly course, it was never for a moment doubted by those who knew him best that the latter would finally be adopted:—the event proved the justness of their conclusion.

On the next day but one, being the 25th of February, the emperor, leaving his own quarters, attended by a few of his omrahs and a guard of eunuchs only, repaired to the Persian camp, where a small pavilion had been prepared for his reception in front of the lines; and there he remained attended by a guard of a thousand Kuzzilbash horsemen, until it should suit the convenience of the king of kings to admit him to the presence. This did not take place until two hours after evening prayers; when, having enjoyed an audience of three hours, he returned for the last time to his own encampment.

On the morning of the 27th of February Mahomed Shah Padshah, with his son Sultaun Ahmed, and the princess Malikeh-ul-Zumaneh, his principal wife, who had just arrived from Dehlee, removed from the Indian camp, which was entirely broken up, to the Persian lines, where due accommodation was prepared for their recep-

tion. The imperial equipage, baggage, and property of every description was likewise brought to the camp by the royal commands, and the Indian omrahs, with their train of attendants, had ground appointed for their quarters on the left of the Persian position. Proper officers, with a sufficient force, were despatched to take possession of the imperial treasury and jewels, which, with the Toshah-khaneh* and all other effects belonging to the crown, as well as to the deceased omrahs, and the whole park of artillery, were placed under a regular guard. The heavy artillery was left behind upon the field until further orders; but two hundred guns, with their carriages and equipments, were selected and sent to Kandahar, there to await the royal pleasure.

The value of this spoil, the first-fruits of the enterprise, must have been very great, although its amount was never precisely known; for it enabled the shah to bestow a gratuity of three months' pay on every soldier in his army and all his attendants, as an earnest of the riches, they were to acquire when the full peishcush or ransom should have been paid up by the emperor, and the negotiation finally brought to a close at Shah-jehanabad.

* The store-room where all furniture, arms, and valuable articles are kept.

In truth it had become highly expedient for the interest of all concerned that some species of accommodation should be effected, for the country was in a deplorable condition. It is impossible to convey any correct idea of the state of anarchy and confusion, of desolation and rapine, which reigned for more than a hundred miles round the camps of the Indian and Persian armies for the fortnight which intervened between the battle of Kurnaul and the commencement of our march to Dehlee. The difficulty of providing a sufficiency of provision and forage for so numerous a host soon rendered it necessary to send out parties to collect supplies : and as the Indian omrahs, whose want of foresight had made their camp a scene of scarcity and even of famine, were forced to do the same, it often happened that such parties encountered each other, and that sharp skirmishes ensued.

In such affairs, whichever party carries the day, the ryots are sure to be the sufferers; and before the period above-mentioned had elapsed there was scarce a village within the said circuit of a hundred miles which did not exhibit ghastly proofs of the storm which had visited it. The greater number were reduced to heaps of blackened ruins, serving as graves to their slaughtered inhabitants. The highways and fields were strewed with corses. The wells were rendered putrid by the number of

bodies thrown into them ; and the few surviving peasants had hid themselves like foxes in holes, from whence they would not venture out until assured of their oppressors' retreat.

It is not to be understood that the whole of this misery was to be laid to account of the invading army ; for in cases of this kind robbers and adventurers of all descriptions take advantage of the confusion to pillage both sides with comparative security : but some conception may be formed of the devastation committed in these districts, when it is stated by those who had the best means of coming to the truth, that the number of persons thus murdered in the villages, fields, and highways around the camp, was to the full as great as that which had perished in the battle of Kurnaul, and that was estimated at seventeen thousand men.

CHAPTER X.

DEHLEE.

ON the first of March his majesty commenced his march for Dehlee, having despatched Thahmaseb Khan Wukeel with a body of five thousand mounted musketeers in advance, to take possession of the palace ; and in conjunction with Saadut Khan to maintain tranquillity in the city, and watch over the safety of the rich property belonging to the omrahs and merchants ; a property which many among us looked upon as already their own.

The order of march was arranged with much solicitude for the preservation of regularity and proper discipline. The royal harem, attended by a guard of four thousand picked men, gholaums, guards, and eunuchs, proceeded at the distance of a full cos from the rest of the army, which was divided into brigades, each marching an arrow's flight apart from the others. The emperor, Ma-

homed Shah, attended by forty or fifty of his principal servants, ten thousand Kuzzilbash horsemen, and two thousand musketeers, appointed as a guard of honour, followed the chief body of our troops at the distance of somewhat more than a mile. After these came the different Indian omrahs, each with his own dependants in separate companies, divided by parties of Kuzzilbash horsemen, who had directions to preserve order on the march. Thus arranged, did the whole enormous mass of the combined armies proceed day after day, until, on the 6th of March, they reached the vicinity of Shahjehanabad, and his majesty arrived at the imperial gardens of Shalimar.

It was a spectacle of high and stirring interest, when, ascending the lofty gateway of one of the caravanserais upon the road, or to a tower in some of the more elevated villages, the eye could range at one sweep over the whole of this vast moving throng, which occupied as it marched a space of more than ten miles in length, by four or five in breadth. The whole face of the country swarmed like a mighty ant-hill with the many-coloured myriads. Columns of dust that obscured the face of heaven for the time, arose from among the mass, and hid them partially from view; then yielding again to the influence of the heated breeze, which now began to breathe powerfully from the west, would give partial glimpses of

whole forests of spears and musket points; of arms and armour flashing in the sun; of waving banners and fluttering pennons; of gilded canopies and flocks of huge dark elephants with their glittering howdahs; of tall camels with their party-coloured furniture and long bird-like necks; of myriads of gallant horsemen, who caracoled and careered their steeds along with a grace and lightness that mocked while it contrasted with the slow imposing current of the mass from which they issued. It was a glorious sight—a sight such as the world can seldom set before the eye of a soldier:—nor was it to be wondered at that a soldier should gaze on it with rapture, and dream of glory, while the sullen hum, the shrill sound of the trumpet, the loud shout, and the heavy foot-tramp of many hundred thousand mounted men swelled into harmonious music on his ear.

But gallant and joyous as it was to view, the track of this tremendous host was not less marked with desolation than had been the scene of its repose. Towns and villages crumbled and disappeared before it, as the green herb and the mighty tree fall alike a prey to the locusts, when they sweep in swarms across the devoted plain. Panneput and Soneput were plundered and destroyed from mere wantonness, and seven thousand murders were added to the dark accounts of carnage, which gave the country cause to groan for our

presence ; nor did the slaughter cease, except for lack of victims.

His majesty having understood that the inhabitants of the imperial city were somewhat disposed to turbulence, resolved to introduce along with the advanced guard a sufficient number of officers on whose conduct and discretion he could depend, in order to watch over the public tranquillity, and guard both public and private property from violence ; and he was graciously pleased to issue with his own lips the royal mandate which directed his servant to aid Thahmaseb Khan in this important duty.

I therefore accompanied that officer when he advanced to occupy the city gates and palace ; and, highly as my expectations had been raised regarding the grandeur and extent of this celebrated capital, they were infinitely exceeded by the reality. The country on either side the river Jumna, for several cos above the city, is rough and somewhat barren ; and at this season of the year, when the cold weather and the parching winds which succeed it had dried up most of the vegetation, it appeared particularly so. There were few or no trees to be seen ; nor did the country seats and gardens of the rich inhabitants extend to any great distance in the direction of our route. It was therefore with less than ordinary preparation for so glorious a spectacle that,

on a delicious morning, while the dust still lay heavy under the influence of the dew, and the sun, just risen, was gilding every object with its rays, as we crowned the low range of rocky heights which hem in the city on the south and west, the whole of this superb capital, with its thick clusters of domes and minarets, its marble palaces, its green gardens and frowning walls, with its far extended plain, covered with many an ancient structure, and marked with the windings of the silver Jumna, lay broadly spread beneath us, in all the fresh and witching beauty of the hour.

From our commanding position we could see the imperial palace, of itself a city, inclosing a space of full three miles in circuit, filled with magnificent buildings, all gorgeous with marble and gold, and begirt with its majestic wall of red granite beaded with marble-topped towers and domed bastions, and its massy yet beautiful gateways, each like a mighty castle. There too rose conspicuously that wonder of the world, the glorious Jumah-musjid, perhaps the largest mosque in the universe, with its lofty domes and tall slender minarets of marble and red granite, overlooking the whole city, as the eye of Omnipotence beholdeth the whole earth. But what human eye could comprehend—what tongue could tell, the endless variety of striking objects which demanded notice within the walls ? while beyond

them, for almost twenty miles, the whole plain was covered with a maze of buildings, mosques, and mausoleums, shrines and temples, forts, caravanserais, and palaces, of every variety of shape and dimension, in all stages of perfection and decay; and in multitudes that confounded the eye and overwhelmed the mind.

Allah-il-ullah ! burst spontaneously from the lips of all who caught a glimpse of this glorious spectacle: " how excellent ! how splendid !—what a city ! what a country !—This is Hindostan ; this is Shahjehanabad!"—" Stafferullah ! Zekee Khan," said Thahmaseb Khan to the nassakchee-bashee, who rode by his side, " if your city of Ispahan be as the proverb says, ' half the world,' this Dehlee may surely be called half of Ginnestan or Paradise. La-illah-il-ullah !—saw you ever such buildings ?—Ispahan!—what is it to this ?—verily, friend, it is *pooch.*"*— " What words are these, O khan !" replied the nassakchee-bashee, monstrously hurt at the comparison, which he could not but feel was adverse to his native city: " your memory has surely deceived you. In what does the noble city of Ispahan yield to this of Dehlee ? Its mud walls and grey brick houses are not so gay, indeed, as these we see ; and we have no marble—there is none you know in Persia

* *Trash.*

but at Maragha;—but then our Cashanee work; the splendid lacquered porcelain-work of our mosques and medressas; and the noble rows of poplars and chihars!—where do you see any such here?—answer me that, khan!”—“ Ah! well done, Ispahanee! let you alone for upholding your own side:—where do I see such things?—and where in Ispahan can you find such palaces, such walls, such buildings, altogether? What are the famous musjid-e-shah and medressa Shah Sooltaun Hoosseen, to yon splendid pile?—what are the Chehl-sittooñ with its thousand mirrors, or the Nigarestan with its pictures; the Alicapee, and all the boasted buildings of the great Shah Abbas, to these clusters of magnificent edifices?—Answer me that, Ispahanee!” Thus retorted Thahmaseb, a native of Khorasan, by no means ill-pleased at an opportunity of galling the pride of the nassakchee-bashee, who, like all natives of the capital, was extravagantly vain of his birth-place, and jealous of any slighting expression regarding it; but he saw the laugh was against him, and therefore changed the subject. “ Hem!” said he, “ the place is not so bad, as your lordship observes; but my eyes are weak—I can scarcely see its excellences at such a distance; and, in truth, I long to be engaged with some of these matters, upon which my hand is to be exercised. Let us see some of the poses of these omrahs and mer-

chants, or the shroffs and bonyahs,* dear, fat pursey rogues, whose bags of rupees and mohrs are as big and well stuffed as their masters' hides. By your head, O khan! and by the soul of your father! I entreat that no time may be lost in securing these same gates; for who knows what a stream of wealth may be dribbling out of them while we stand prattling here and gazing at fine buildings?"—"May thy father be burned, thou sworn drinker of blood and seizer of goods!—thou art ever athirst for prey!—But thus it is: each to his trade:—the soldier to his spear and sword, the butcher to his knife;—the currier loves to scrape a filthy hide, as well as the warrior to run a maidaun jereed in hand. But fair and softly, comrade; raise not your hopes too high: remember you, or do you know, that our business is to protect and not to plunder?—to save and not to kill?—that our monarch,—may his shadow increase!—has agreed and promised to suspend all hostile measures in consideration of a peishcush—a subsidy?"—"Ay," retorted the other, "I have heard, and I do know that some of those who have the royal ear,—may their fathers be burned eternally!—have swallowed a handsome dish of dirt, in concocting such a treaty:—eternal curses on them who seek to rob the soldier of his spoil! But something better may turn up yet," muttered he.

* Bankers and shopkeepers.

This heedless chat was passing while the troops were closing up from the rear, and we then resumed our progress, each division filing off to its appointed station. Five hundred men were sent round by the Coutzia Baugh, and the northern side of the city, to occupy the numerous ghauts and issues leading down to the sandy flat, which in the rains is covered by the waters of the Jumna. The Kashmere gate was occupied by a trusty penjah-bashee* with two hundred men. Similar parties were sent round with proper guides to secure the Ajmere, the Toorkman, the Dehlee, and other gates on the southern and western sides of the city; while the rest of the force proceeded to enter by the gate of Lahore, which is the principal one of the city, and which leads directly by the Chandnee chowk to the gate of the "Kallah Mubarick," or palace.

Our arrival being expected by the imperial guards at the gate, they were prepared to admit us; but the bustle of our entrance, and the shrieks of some women and children, who were terrified at the sight of our rough-looking soldiers, occasioned an interruption of a singular and affecting kind. We became aware that the tumult had roused the attention of some one who occupied a small chamber above the gateway, by hearing a

* Captain of five hundred men.

proud and angry, but tremulous voice, demanding the cause of such an unusual tumult. The only return made to this demand was, a few soothing expressions from the Indian attendants, and certain rude taunting jests from some of our men who heard them ; and this unsatisfactory reply had the effect of bringing upon the scene an apparition, which touched even at that moment, the rough and scoffing troopers themselves. We had just entered the outward gate, and were filing through the small court between it and the interior one, which gives admittance to the street, when, descending from the narrow steps which led to the apartments above the gateway, supported by two servants, appeared the form of an aged man, of great stature, but emaciated and bent by the weight of years. He was clad in a long dress of flowered Cashmere shawl girt around him by a black girdle of the same material, in which was stuck an agate-handled knife of curious workmanship, and over this was thrown a purple fur-lined cloak. His head was covered with a turban of green shawl, from under which his hollow eyes, glassy and dim as those of a corse, gleamed with a passing ray of angry excitement, like the light which a flash of lightning lends to the leaden cloud, giving to his wrinkled visage an unearthly animation. A very long beard, white as the snow of Hindoo-Coosh, concealed the whole lower part of his noble

though shrunken features, and streamed upon his breast, down even to his girdle.

"What means this tumult?" uttered he, in the shrill and broken tones of extreme age, and rearing his tall figure almost to its height, as he gazed around him: "who are the insolent caitiffs that dare thus to insult this august gate? By the might of Allah, they dare too, to pass it, without performing the due obeisance to the residence of the sacred presence! Guards!—cowards! what does this mean? Why suffer ye such insolent contempt of the house of Timour?—seize upon them fellows!"

A pause of surprise was succeeded by a burst of brutal laughter from the foremost of the troops. Thahmaseb Khan, a blunt soldier, and not of the finest feelings, had beckoned to have the old man removed; when, by an effort of expiring nature, as if the dying lamp flamed upwards for a moment before its final extinction, he shook off his supporters, and drawing the scimitar which hung at his side, strode one step firmly forward towards the centre of the gateway, exclaiming in a voice that had attained as much steadiness as his form: "How? treason here?—Enemies entering the city?—Ho!—shut the gates there!—Guards! Allee Khan! fire upon the villains:—where are ye all, my soldiers?—cut them to pieces there:—alarm the city:—no one passes here but over my

body—.” And he whirled his crooked scimitar with a force and energy, that was astonishing in one of his years. A rough fellow of a nakeeb, who with ten men had the duty of clearing the way before us, now advanced towards the old man:—“Away, thou old fool!” cried he, “away, and let them pass—they will ride over thee.” The attendants of the old man now also came forward, beseeching him to retire; and the Indian guards of the gate advanced to remove him gently: but, still maddened with the extraordinary excitement, he resisted their attempts with an energy, which even threatened their safety, and drove them from him. “What! do ye mutiny? ye base-born and ungrateful dogs! are ye all faithless?—all traitors?—Then Aitebad Oollah himself will defend the pass as long as breath remains.”

“To the devil with the old fool!” grumbled the nakeeb; “does he want to have his miserable half seer of blood let out before his time? Away, old madman!”—and he raised the short banner-spear he bore in his hand, as if he would have smitten the old man, whose sword aimlessly sawing the air, alighted on the outstretched arm, and slightly wounded it. In an instant, the spear which had at first been lifted in idle menace, now rose with more decided purpose above the old man’s head: a murmur was heard among the Indian soldiers;

but I did not wait to see whether any of them would imperil his own life in defence of their aged commander ; for, indignant at the nakeeb's first movement, I had spurred towards him, and now dashing my stirrups into my horse's flank, a single bound carried me against the rude offender, whilst a blow of my sword sent the banner-spear from his hand, as he reeled and fell at the distance of several yards. "Brute ! dog !—would you murder the helpless creature ?" exclaimed I, and springing from my horse, I alighted just in time to catch the poor old man as he was sinking on the pavement.

A buzz of mingled approbation and discontent arose from the several parties which formed the crowd around me ; but I paid little heed to either, while, assisted by his immediate servants, I carried the venerable old warrior to the stone bench within the gateway, and laid him upon a charpaee* which stood there. He was almost lifeless : the strength which had been inspired by the temporary excitement of his frame, had passed away as suddenly as it came, and given way to extreme debility. "Take courage, father!—repose yourself in peace; you are in the hands of friends : no one shall harm you ;" said I, in the Persian language, and in tones as soothing as I could command. The old man tried to fix his failing eyes upon my face; but they wandered over it with a sightless glare, and after

* Couch or bedstead.

a few moments' pause, and a faint wave of his hand, he said in a trembling voice, "I hear the words; I know the tongue; but who is it that speaks to Aitebad Oollah?"—"Father," I replied, "it is one whom you know not, but yet a friend that will protect you from injury: be pacified then."—"These are the words and accents of Iraun," said he, "and the sound is sweet to my ears; but how does it come to be heard, in these evil days, within the walls of Shahjehanabad?—But stay!" continued he, slowly passing his withered hand across his brow, "I have heard,—yes, surely I have heard,—but my old brain is dried up; I think, and I cannot well remember."—"What news is this?" growled a surly voice at my elbow, as the old man was still speaking,—"what fool is he that does not know that Mahomed Padshah is a prisoner, and that Nadir Shah, king of kings, and the shadow of the Almighty, is conqueror of Hindostan, and now at the gates of Shahjehanabad. Khan," continued he, addressing himself to me, with the usual military salute, "my orders are to say, that the troops are moving onwards, and that the exalted general, Thahmaseb Khan Wukeel requires your lordship's assistance in the arrangements which must be made at the Kallah Mubaric."—"Kumbucht! haramzadeh!—base-born wretch!" exclaimed the old man, rising on his elbow, with a faint gleam of reviving energy, and straining his

glaring eyeballs towards the sound, “ who art thou that speakest such lying blasphemies ?”—“ Peace, man,” said I to the messenger, “ restrain thy brutal tongue, and learn reverence for the aged ; they cannot be enemies. Father, heed not that ruffian’s words, but compose your own soul. To you, who approach the borders of Paradise, the things of this world should be as nothing.”—“ My son, thou hast said the truth,” replied he ; “ and the blessing of Allah will cleave to thee for this good deed to an aged pilgrim about to quit this earth. Marvel not that the mind, worn out by the struggles and calamities of near a hundred years, should falter or wander at the last. But the mist clears away, and truth dawns upon my faculties : blessings to those who are departing ; woe, misery and woe for those who remain ! But I am faint ; Gholam Hooesein, carry me for the last time to my quarters : I would die at my post. Tell the emperor I did so ; and if all had been as true to him as his old killahdar, the Kuzzilbashes would not have now been lords of Dehlee. Stranger ! take an old man’s blessing, and mayest thou never stand in need of the kindness thou hast shown to Aitebad Oollah !”

I assisted the servants to carry the poor old man to his little chamber above the gateway ; but before we reached it, I felt his arm, which was passed around my neck, press it for a moment

convulsively, and then relax:—and when we laid him on the couch, the nerveless limbs and half-closed sightless eyes convinced us that the spirit had already departed.

A sigh of pity and of sorrow swelled my breast as I gazed upon the body of this faithful old servant; and I might have lingered over it longer, had not the increasing bustle and shouts beneath awakened me to a recollection of my duty. Placing two of my immediate followers as guards in the apartment, to prevent any indignities, and to assist in performing the proper duties to the deceased, I turned to the window which commanded the whole broad street that leads straight to the gate of the palace, and which was now filled with the soldiers of Iraun. Their red caps and steel spear-points glanced brilliantly through the dense clouds of dust which were raised by the feet of their horses, and the numerous banners and streamers fluttered gaily above them;—but they rode almost alone: of the people of the city few yet dared to come forth; no shops were open, nor was there the smallest sign of confidence, still less of welcome to be perceived, although proclamation of security to person and to property had been formally made, and was even at the very moment in the act of being published. A few stragglers might be seen upon the terraced

house-tops, or cautiously peeping out from behind the screened casements, at the unwonted scene ; but for any other evidence of population we might have as well been traversing a deserted city. Hurrying then to my horse, which was held at the gate by a jeloodar, I galloped to the front, where Thahmaseb Khan did not fail to rally me with some tartness upon my soft-hearted foolery, as he called it, to an old Hindostanee madman.

On approaching the entrance of the palace, it was impossible not to be struck with admiration and awe at the imposing character of this first of royal residences, which now with its exquisitely-built wall, full sixty feet high, and its noble gateway, domed and turreted with pure white marble, which rises like a mighty castle thirty feet above the wall itself, stood full in view as the troops drew up into line under the fine old trees which shade the broad esplanade before it.

In this place Lootf Oollah Khan Saduc, the governor, having received the emperor's commands to that effect, with due reverence advanced from the massy gateway, and presented the keys of its gates, intimating at the same time that all within the walls of the " Kallah Mubaric" was at the disposal of the governor and his deputies. Upon this, Thahmaseb Khan required that the Indian troops should withdraw, and sent a proper

officer; with two hundred men, to take charge of the post ; but he neither entered the body of the palace, nor permitted others to do so.

The duty of Saadut Khan, who was more directly charged with the preservation of tranquillity and the protection of property within the walls, demanding his immediate presence to visit the various districts of the city, he was furnished, at his own desire, with a detachment of Kuzzilbash horse to assist him in this service ; and much to my own satisfaction, I was placed in command of this party : for I anticipated much pleasure as well as information from viewing this ancient city in the society of so accomplished a nobleman. But an illness, originating probably in the wounds he received at Kurnaul, having forced Saadut Khan to retire to his own house, he was obliged to depute in his room a young man, his relation and follower, named Meer Hussun Khan ; to whom I afterwards became indebted for many a pleasant hour.

Our first care was to place sufficient guards in all the principal chowks* and caravanserais, particularly in the street called the Dareebah, the Chandnee chowk, the Khanum's bazar, the Sheraffah Oordooee, the Pahr Gunge, and all the other principal bazars. Guards were also stationed in many of the houses of the nobility ; and

* Market-places.

not a few of the opulent merchants and principal Hindoo inhabitants entreated that some of our men might be quartered in their *cotties*, or premises, in order to guarantee their safety. Our arrangements were completed before the evening closed in ; and although the inhabitants did not appear in the streets, nor was confidence so far established as to induce people to open their shops, and to pursue their ordinary occupations, still the tranquillity was complete, and promised to remain so.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PALACE.

THE sun had set, and the troops retiring to their quarters had left their officers, if not less anxious, at least less actively employed than during the bustle of the past day. Every man was now engaged in providing for his own wants ; and I, among others, was endeavouring to make myself comfortable for the night in a little cell near the Cotewal's chiboutra* in the Chandnee chowk, when I heard a voice at the door, inquiring in the Indo-Persian language for "Ismael Khan Bahadoor, of the Kuzzilbash guards." An attendant, who had nestled himself into a neighbouring cell, and who was by no means pleased at being raised from preparing his evening meal, was replying somewhat surly to the

* The Cotewal is an officer in the charge of the police; Chiboutra, his office.

inquirer, when I myself gave an answer, and desired him to be admitted. Accordingly, the mat which hung before the entrance being lifted up, a man clad in the Indian garb, but muffled up in a dark-coloured shawl, and followed by a bearer carrying a banghee or bamboo pole across his shoulder, at either end of which hung a large covered basket, entered the little apartment, and having saluted me profoundly after the Indian fashion, stood upright before me, with his hands respectfully joined, waiting to be addressed.

"Who may you be, my friend?" said I, slightly returning the man's salute, "and what is your business? welcome, if your errand be good. Say what is it?" The man, withdrawing from the lower part of his face the shawl which had concealed it, displayed a handsome countenance of a deep olive complexion, with large expressive eyes, and a well-formed, slightly elevated nose. His thick-set whiskers were trimmed close to the cheek and cut into the handsomest curve; his jet-black mustachios curled gracefully on his upper lip; but his beard, like that of most of the Indian omrahs and their followers, was closely shaved. An earnest expression of pleasure tempered by respect, lighted up his handsome features, as he replied to my interrogatory in the Persian language, as it is spoken in Hindostan:—"My lord, the name of thy slave is Alla Verdee Beg, who

is the grandson of that Aitebad Oollah Beg, whom your lordship's humanity saved from the insults of the soldiers this morning at the Lahore gate. The old man's body now rests within the holy precincts of Nizam-u-deen Aulia's cemetery ; —may Allah grant that his soul has passed the narrow bridge, and tastes the joy which awaits the spirits of good Mussulmans in Paradise ! He was a weary pilgrim upon earth, my lord, and few there are to weep for him : but these few are grateful, and in safer times would gladly show their gratitude. In the mean time, they send by me, his grandson, a few simple tokens of their respect :—deign, sir, to receive them."

He motioned to the bearer to approach and put down the baskets, which were covered with crimson cloth embroidered with silk. One of them contained a variety of dishes filled with rich stews and pillaws, and all the fruits of the season. In the other was a tray, where lay a pair of beautiful shawls ; another intended for a turban, and several pieces of keen khab or brocade, satin and muslin, calculated for handsome garments of the Indian fashion.

" By my father's head," exclaimed I, when I saw this display, " you Indians have solid ways of proving your gratitude ! but these were not needed to convince me of it, and far less to repay me for a simple act of humanity. We Persians are not

all brutes ; and he must have been a heartless monster who could have borne to see the venerable old man insulted. But soldiers are rough, reckless fellows, you know, and don't always think before they act. The sight of this glorious city, too, had maddened them ; they were impatient of any opposition where none was expected. After all, it was these wild Toorkomans, who think of nothing but blood and plunder. But come ! what has happened was written, and could not be avoided. And now, as to your good cheer, it does not come amiss ; and, inchallah ! you shall stay and eat it with me ; for the rest, I neither mean to rob nor plunder you ; and so you shall take back your goods : you may need them all before the game now playing be done."—" Nay, my lord, I entreat you not to refuse them ; let your servant find favour in your sight : these are trifles ; do not disgrace me by rejecting them."—" You have found favour, man ! I do accept your offering ; but I do not want all these things, and I cannot rob you of them. Here, bismillah ! I will take this handkerchief ;—that is enough for a keepsake."—" Nay, my lord, receive this shawl, it was his own : the old man would have rejoiced to see you wear it."—" Well, then, I will."—" And this single piece of brocade from Cossi-Benares, let me entreat, it will exalt your servant."—" Well, well ! enough ;—no more. There, now ; sit down

and tell me about your grandfather—who and what he was.”—“ My lord is too gracious: his servant may not sit in his presence: he will stand.”—“ Pshaw!—these Hindekees are so full of forms: we Iranee soldiers have no time for so much ceremony; in the field the khan and his jeloodar sit upon the same horse-cloth:—sit down, man, in God’s name!—Bismillah !”

At length his scruples were conquered, and we got seated with the dishes before us. But the Hindostanee scarcely would venture to thrust a hand into one of them, until by degrees my frankness overcame his shyness; and before the meal was concluded he began to converse with something like freedom. “ The old man, whose grey hairs you this day protected from insult,” said he at length, in reply to my repeated inquiries, “ was descended from one of those Persian warriors who were sent by Thahmaseb Shah to assist the emperor Hoomayoon (on whom be the peace of God!) in recovering his kingdom, and who having experienced the favour and liberality of that munificent monarch, remained attached to his service until his death. His father, who had the honour to be a personal attendant upon the great and enlightened Shah Jehan, fell at the very feet of his master in defending him from the attack of an Affghaun chief; who, thinking himself affronted by some decision of the emperor, had laid a plot to assassi-

nate him in his tent while travelling from Lahore to Dehlee. This event occurred in the fourteenth year of that monarch's reign, when my grandfather was but an infant, scarcely twelve months old ; and in consideration of the father's services, the son was provided for, and carefully brought up in the royal household.

" Increasing in years and strength, the young Aitebad Oollah, as the child was named, grew up in the same zealous devotion to the hand that cherished him ; which had been the characteristic of his father. Accidental circumstances attached him to the great Aurungzébe, in preference to any other of the sons of the monarch who had been the protector of his youth. He even accompanied Mahomed, the son of that prince, in his war against Cuttub Shah, king of Golcondah ; where he attracted the notice and approbation of the celebrated Meer Mahomed Jumlah. It was therefore natural that in the bloody civil war which succeeded, between Aurungzebe and his brother, the brave Dara-Shekoah, my grandfather should continue attached to the former ; and he rose according to his desert, to be a munsubdar of a thousand men.

" Who is there that has not heard of the disorders which involved the land of Hindostan in bloodshed and confusion upon the removal of that mighty sovereign from the pains of this sinful world to the

joys of Paradise ? The turbulent spirits which his powerful sway had restrained within bounds, broke loose upon his decease, and troubled the whole empire for many a year, until at length the sun of peace arose, and shed its influence abroad, from the throne of our present august monarch.

“ During the whole of these disturbances my grandfather continued faithful to the true descendants of his first great master Aurungzebe. He had adhered to Shah Allum, upon whose unhappy death he followed the fortunes of the brave though unfortunate Azeem Ooshaun, and was present at the battle in which that luckless prince lost at once his crown and his life. Upon this catastrophe he retired into Bengal, and tendered his services to Furrookhsere, the son of the murdered prince ; with whom, when he resolved upon making his bold and successful attempt to recover the throne of his fathers, my grandfather returned to Dehlee ; and it was in his service that he first received command of a body of household troops, to which was attached the charge of the principal gate of the city : a charge not indeed commensurate with his rank, his long service, and tried fidelity, but still a post both of honour and emolument ; and perhaps as considerable as the circumstances of his master, surrounded and hampered with the claims of hungry favourites, could bestow.

" The troubles of this reign, and the miserable end of the unfortunate Furrookhsere, once more deprived the old man of a master. He chose not to be the slave of every pageant whom the caprice of the ambitious Seyed brothers * chose to place for a month upon the throne of the Moghuls ; nor was it until he saw the grandson of his former prince, Shah Allum, elevated by Providence to the throne of his ancestors, that he again presented himself at the footstool of power. His age now precluded him from engaging in active duty ; but the emperor, who, when permitted to follow the dictates of his own heart, is deficient neither in benevolence nor in justice, in consideration of the old man's devotion to his family, bestowed upon him the same honorary post which he had enjoyed under his grandfather. In charge of this he has ever since continued, until his fervid imagination and zeal, acting upon a judgment weakened by age, inspired him gradually with the belief that his office was of the utmost consequence to the state, and he himself one of its chief pillars of support. His mental and bodily faculties alike became merged in the second childishness of age, leaving fidelity alone in its pristine vigour, together with a powerful sense of the reverence due to his prince and the long glories of the house of Timour;

* Two noblemen who at this period exercised a very important influence over the court and country.

You, sir, are witness that these sentiments glowed unabated to the last in his bosom, as if they had furnished the oil which kept the lamp so long alive ; and as these received their final shock, so did that lamp expire. Since the days of Hoomayoon—ay, of Baber himself, no human being has been suffered to pass the sacred gate, where the old man persisted in maintaining his daily guard, without dismounting and making a profound obeisance to the dwelling of the king of the world, which from thence first strikes the beholder's view. When this morning he heard the tumult, and saw the unceremonious entry of your Kuzzilbashes, ignorant of, or forgetting the occasion, he only thought of chastising the authors of the supposed insult.—You know the rest.

“ It is worth remark, that my grandfather, reduced to the feebleness of extreme old age, (for on this, the day of his birth, as well as of his death, he had numbered ninety-eight years,) had ceased for many months before to take an active part in the business of his office. Still, with that strict attention to his duty which he continued to maintain in form, if not in fact, to the last, he had himself regularly carried each morning at sunrise to his little chamber above the gateway, although from the last time the emperor had passed through the gate of Lahore, he had attended but little to any thing.

that occurred. This was the first morning since then that he evinced any interest in external objects : and whether it was the unusual bustle that recalled his torpid faculties, or that on this his fated day the voice of destiny had aroused the flagging spirit to an exertion so unwonted, thy servant is unable to say. But he is gone ! the faithful old servant has departed ; and may he join his many masters in the realms of eternal joy !”—“Amen !” responded I. “Oh ! Allee Verdee, and may such be the fate and reward of all who zealously perform their duty here ! Thy tale has interested me ; thy grandfather was a worthy servant : but it is the ripe fruit that has fallen. Grieve not thou that the wind has shaken it from the tree. Tell me rather of the living. What is thy rank and employment ? for thy aspect and address declare thy breeding to be good.”

“Your slave is honoured in your lordship’s notice :—his stars have hitherto been propitious, and have raised him high in the service of the state. He has the honour to be nazir of the wardrobe to his highness Sultaun Ahmed Meerza ; and in this station would have remained in the august camp, had he not been despatched in advance to assist in making preparations for ‘the presence’ at Dehlee. In his official capacity

thy servant enjoys both credit and acquaintance in the Kallah Mubarik : he is known to Lootf Allee Khan Saduc and others of the chief officers at the imperial court ; and although orders have been issued to prevent the indiscriminate entrance of curious persons into the palace, until the arrival of the king of kings, he can, if agreeable to Ismael Khan Bahadoor, introduce him into this wonder of the age ; and display to his eyes its riches and beauties, as they have descended from the first of the race of Timour until the present day. Who can tell how long they may remain entire ? Who can say how soon the splendour of that house may be clouded for ever ?”

With infinite pleasure did I accept of the young man’s offer ; and we agreed that after the muster and duties of the ensuing morning we should proceed to examine the royal mansions within the walls of the Kallah Mubarik or palace, familiarly called the Loll Kallah, from the redness of the stone which forms its walls.

In the morning, while placing myself according to our purpose of the preceding evening, under the guidance of Allee Verdee Beg, we were joined by Meer Hussun Khan, who hearing of our intentions, proposed joining our party. “ I also,” remarked he, “ am well known to the officers of the palace ; and with all possible respect to the

nazir-jee,* can at least prove no obstruction to your progress." The compliment with which we replied had more of sincerity than such speeches can commonly pretend to, and we forthwith proceeded to the palace.

The peculiar grandeur of the gateway, which had made so strong an impression upon us all at our first approach, by no means lost its imposing character upon more frequent and minute examination. The excellence of the workmanship, the beauty of the materials and carved work, with the exquisite proportions of its complicated architecture, which threw an air of lightness and elegance over a structure in itself massy and gigantic; all impressed themselves upon the beholder more forcibly, the more he looked upon it. "Ay! it is a lofty and a noble building," said Meer Hus-sun, replying to some laudatory exclamation of mine: "and observe, yonder are the apartments of the killahdar; no bad quarters, believe me:—see, that is the balcony belonging to them, and these windows are those of his private apartments."—"But how is the killahdar permitted to occupy so commanding a station?—one that must overlook,

* The word *jee* in Hindostanee is expressive of affectionate respect, and is generally added as in the text by persons in addressing those whom they regard highly; as servants to their masters.

I should think, the sacred muhl* itself."—"Oh! content you, sir," replied Allee Verdee: "care has been taken to prevent such an invasion upon the royal privacy; no approach to that side is permitted; for although the sacred harem is shrouded by many intervening buildings from the sight of the most prying eye; still the reverence due to his majesty demands that none should have the power of even glancing in the forbidden direction from so elevated a station. As for the city, those who conceive themselves in danger, may look out for themselves; little cares the killabdar for their ill-will."

"Ay," said Meer Hussun, "he who built this gate and palace, if he be not sore belied, had no great objections to peep into other men's privacy, however sacred he might preserve his own. Often did he seat himself among yonder lofty pinnacles, and amuse himself with observing what passed in his capital below. It has been whispered even, that he possessed a wonderful instrument, the gift of some cunning Frank ambassador, by which the interiors of men's dwellings were laid open to his eye, and he could see their inmates and all that passed therein; it may be a fable, but that very munificent and most susceptible monarch is well known to have often solaced himself for the cares of state by adventures and

* Harem.

indulgences of a very amusing description. As to the inviolable sanctity of the imperial harem, it becomes not a slave at the foot of the throne to call it in question : yet if stone and lime could speak ;—if the mootee muhl, and the ayesha muhl, and the dark passage that issues from the foot of Sooleymaun Boorj could tell all they have witnessed, perhaps :—but no matter—.” He stopped, and smiled significantly.

“ But as for the killahdar,” continued he, after a moment’s pause, “ his office is honourable as his quarters are desirable, and like all other good things in this world, they are sources of envy and malice. To what else indeed could be attributed the accident which so nearly proved fatal to Khodadad Khan, the very last killahdar, not more than five or six years ago ?—what say you, Nazir-jee ? could it have arisen from any other cause ?—surely *you* place no credit in the foolish stories that were told about the matter ?”—“ I remember the circumstance,” observed the more cautious Allee Verdee, “ but I know nothing of particulars—I was not in Dehlee at the time.” “ Oh ! prudent !—well, you are in the right, perhaps.”—“ But what is the story, gentlemen ?” said I ; “ do not excite my curiosity thus, and then leave it unsatisfied.”—“ Oh ! there is not much in it after all,” replied Meer Hussun, “ beyond a practical proof of the necessity of circumspection

in those of exalted office :—Khodadad Khan, a gallant and gay young nobleman, devoted it was said to the pleasures of his own harem, and willing also to know how those of his neighbours were provided, was killahdar of the palace at the time I have alluded to ; and, contrary to the general practice, which leaves these quarters principally to the use of the deputy; he retained them for his own use ; and in imitation perhaps of the great Shah Jehan, spent no small portion of his time in that very verandah, and in the more elevated parts of the gateway.

“ One day, while attended by his servant, he was occupied in despatching the business of his office, and occasionally, in watching a flight of pigeons belonging to one of the princes within the palace, he was alarmed by the whiz of a match-lock-ball, which coming from the direction of the chowk, struck his principal chobedar while in the act of presenting him with a paper; the poor wretch staggered against the low parapet screen, toppled over it, and falling from that fearful height, dashed his brains out upon this very pavement at our feet. Whence the said ball issued was never exactly ascertained ; although the rumours to which I alluded did speak of a certain Patan officer, whose domestic establishment had attracted the benevolent regard of the killahdar. Certain however it is, that he took the hint, gave up his favourite

seat in the verandah, and soon after the quarters, to his naib. Poor fellow! he did not long enjoy the security he sought by the sacrifice ; for being detached against the Mahrattas, with the army under Mouzuffer Khan, he was killed in a skirmish. But come, we are standing here all day ; —shall we advance ?”

“ Here, sir, are quarters fit for the royal guard of such a palace,” observed Allee Verdee, as we proceeded through a noble arcaded passage, having two rows of chambers on either hand, one above another. “ Is not this avenue a worthy approach to such a royal entrance ?—Here watch the omrahs and munsubdars, whose rank entitles them to such an honour, each in his turn ; and here too have the various mootsuddees, secretaries, and writers of the court, their offices :—and behold !” pointing to a variety of pavilion-like buildings furnished with little gardens, on either hand, as we advanced along the street which led to the first court, “ these are the quarters of various officers and omrahs, whose duty obliges them to be much within the palace.”

Passing through the first court, which was fitted up entirely for the accommodation of the troops and servants attached to the royal establishment, we entered another gateway, before which was extended a screen of crimson serpudehs, or as they are called in Hindostan, cannauts.

An opening in these admitted us into another extensive court, at the further side of which rose a majestic edifice enriched with white marble and gold.

"Yonder," said Allee Verdee, "is the dewan-e-aum, the hall of public audience. In this noble hall the 'centre of the universe' enlightens his subjects at stated hours by the glory of his presence, listens to their petitions, and decides their causes:—is it not a structure worthy of such a purpose?" And so in truth it was; extensive and lofty, supported upon arcades handsomely formed after the Indian fashion; it was open on three sides; while on the fourth, just opposite to the entrance of the court, was placed the balcony in which the emperor takes his seat during the hours of audience.

While contemplating the building at some distance, my companions invited me to approach and enter it. I did so, and was astonished at the beauty of the workmanship which I found there. The whole of the balcony in particular was exquisitely carved in white marble, and the back parts and canopy above were adorned in a style to which hitherto I had been quite a stranger. Our most splendid buildings in Persia are either fitted up with lacquered porcelain displaying various patterns and devices, or are finished in painting of lapis-lazuli and gold, which produces a very rich effect.

But the finishing of this was altogether different from these, and very superior in beauty and effect. The whole was divided symmetrically into compartments, each of which contained the figure of a bird or beast, a flower or fruit, executed in the exactest possible resemblance as to form and colour; and, strange to say, by means of stones of various colours inlaid in the solid marble: every tint and shade was true to the life: not an error in a leaf, nor in a feather, in the bloom of the plum, the down of the peach, nor the brilliant polish of the dark grape, could be detected by the most observant eye; even the various more delicate tints of every flower, the spots upon their decayed leaves,—all were expressed with the greatest possible nicety by a fragment of stone of a corresponding shade.

“La-illah il-ullah!—it is magic; it is the work of the gins or the peris! and there is the magician’s picture, no doubt,” exclaimed I, pointing to the figure of a man who appeared in the midst of all this rich work calmly playing, as it seemed to me, upon a sitara, or stringed instrument of an unknown and peculiar shape. My companions smiled:—“You will see still greater wonders than these,” said Allee Verdee: “that figure is in truth supposed to be the workman’s picture; but he was no magician; the same work is now performed in Dehlee, probably by persons instructed by this

very workman, whom tradition supposes to have been a Frank stone-cutter."—"Oh ! rare and astonishing Franks!" said I: "but before we leave the place, tell me what mean those huge stone sockets that are fixed in the court-yard?"—"These," replied my friend, "are the sockets of great tent-poles, which serve to uphold a pavilion that covers the whole of this spacious court upon particular occasions ; and a gorgeous pavilion it is, spreading its crimson roof to the sun, or to the dews of night, while within it is lined with rich yellow damask silk, and stretched by cords covered with scarlet cloth. Its ornaments and garniture are of solid silver ; rich carpets cover the ground ; and at night it is illuminated by a thousand coloured lamps in silver vessels, which burn perfumed oil. Under this magnificent canopy does the shadow of the universe entertain his court, and the ambassadors who repair to kiss the dust of his feet, with every sort of game and show ; while the thousand om-rabs of Hindostan are ranged in their various grades of rank around the throne, of which they are the worthy pillars."—"Ay, and rotten supports do they sometimes prove ; or they are the more traduced," remarked Meer Hussun:—"but let that pass, and let us go on."

"Behold," said Allee Verdee, as we passed through another entrance, which was also secured by a complicated arrangement of serpurdehs—"behold the dewan-e-khass, the hall of private audi-

ence, the chosen spot whereon is fixed the throne of the world!—examine it well, khan, and say if Iraun itself can produce its equal for beauty and magnificence." And well might he boast its beauties; for if the chaste elegance of this incomparable structure filled me with admiration at the first view, how was that astonishment and delight increased when, upon a nearer approach, I could distinguish its splendid details. The spacious court before it was bounded by a terrace of pure white marble, the front wall of which was divided into compartments by golden mouldings, and ornamented with graceful figures and flowers of the same description. From the centre of this terrace, and occupying the greater portion of its extent, rose a quadrangular edifice of the same materials, consisting of a double series of arcades, of the most exquisite style of architecture, the outer of which formed a verandah to the other, and all supported a lofty roof. From the four corners of this roof, which was surmounted by a plain marble parapet, sprung light and elegant turrets of the same materials, each composed of four pillars covered by a gilded dome. Such was the exterior of the royal hall; but its internal decorations were still more uniquely beautiful. The ceiling of the apartment included within the inner arcade was formed of solid silver,* divided by rich golden mouldings

* This ceiling was afterwards carried off by the Mahrattas, who

into reticulated compartments, all exquisitely carved and chased ; and every column of both arcades, as well as the wall above each arch, was divided tastefully into separate pannels cut into the stone, which were marked by mouldings of solid gold, and richly filled with flowers of the same material.

The whole lower compartments, however, both upon the columns and on such parts of the wall as were solid (for the arcade was open on all sides), were divided in the same manner as the rest, but filled up with groupes of flowers and fruit, executed in the same style as those in the dewan-e-aum, but infinitely more beautiful, and more tastefully executed. If then I admired the one, how much additional food for wonder was there here, where not only the richest colours, but the most beautiful materials attracted the eye, in a profusion that was as astonishing as the use to which they were turned. The finest cornelians and jaspers of every hue, lapis-lazuli, agates, onyxes, bloodstone, and even turquoises, lent their beauty, and were united in this superb style of decoration ! But I drop the pen, in despair of doing justice by any description to the unrivalled magnificence of this kingly edifice ; of which the motto inscribed around the cor-

melted it down into money, of which it amounted to near half a million sterling.—*Ed.*

nice of the roof in letts of gold conveys the most appropriate idea

*"Ager Ferdousee der rouee zumeen ust
Ameen ust ! Ameen ust ! Ameen ust!"*

*"If there be a paradise upon the face of the earth,
It is this ! It is this ! It is this!"**

"Is the khan satisfied?" asked Allee Verdee Beg, after he had left me for some minutes to the astonishment which almost overwhelmed me:—"Do these things approach his expectations?"—"God is great!—wonderful!—most wonderful!" exclaimed I, in rapture at the sight. "A paradise?—yea, truly, if the hands of man have ever created a paradise, it is here."—"Ah!" observed Meer Hussun, with a shake of his head, "it is nothing as you see it now; the place is naked: were you to see it as it is decked out upon state occasions, then you might with truth call it a paradise—the court of the sooltaun of Ginnestan."—"My friend, I am satisfied as it is," replied I. "Whether should you choose to meet your beautiful mistress in the undress of the bath, or shrouded in rich coverings of shawls and brocade?"—"Right, khan!—you have spoken well: but yet are brocades and shawls well worth beholding, provided

* The reader will doubtless recollect the same words nearly, being made use of in speaking of this palace, by Mr. Moore in his beautiful poem of "Lalla Rookh," which are taken from this very inscription.

they are so disposed as to display, not conceal the charms they are meant to adorn. Conceive now the awnings of crimson silk extending from the roof half across the court; cannauts of the same material stretched upon poles of silver, flanking this hall of beauty, and causing it to shine like a brilliant jewel in a rich setting: figure to yourself this marble floor, covered with rich and glowing carpets of velvet, instead of these plain settringees,* and in place of that simple musnud of crimson velvet and gold, standing under that unpretending hanging of brocade, imagine to yourself that wonder of the world, the inestimable ‘peacock throne,’ with its gorgeous canopy, blazing with a perfect coating of gems, placed upon a foot-cloth of gold; and seated thereon the centre of the universe, clad in his dazzling robes of state, surrounded by his omrahs and officers, like brilliant stars drinking light from the sun of their firmament; and the whole court below filled with his guards and attendants, in glittering arms and rich apparel:—then indeed does the dewan-e-khass seem worthy of itself, and then would every eye acknowledge and every tongue confess that the world cannot afford such another spectacle!”

I could not repress a smile at this explosion of enthusiasm, when the thought glanced across my brain that the monarch whose magnificence he

* A common carpet.

had described in such glowing colours was at the very moment a prisoner in the camp of his conqueror, and indebted only to the clemency of that conqueror for life, and whatsoever else should be permitted to remain his property. I even thought to have spoken out; but prudence as well as delicacy restrained me, for the words of the poet occurred to my memory. “Exult not, O man! in the downfall of thine adversary; for how canst thou tell whether the earth be not shaking under thine own feet?”—And I recollect that taunts would be ill applied to persons who were exerting themselves to please me; so I held my peace; and after repeating my very sincere commendations on the beauty of the place, and the splendour of its decorations, whether fully or imperfectly displayed, I inquired where the celebrated peacock throne was deposited; and whether it were possible to obtain a sight of it.

“I fear,” replied Allee Verdee, “that all my credit may be insufficient to gratify you in this; for the throne is kept in the Toisheh Khaneh, and the jealousy maintained in that quarter is at present extreme.”—“But I,” said Meer Hussun, “hope to assist you there; for I am on terms of intimacy with the naib who has charge of it in conjunction with the Persian officer, placed there by late orders; and if your lordship can prevail on him, I have little doubt we may view the wonders

of that repository. And see, this chobedar* shall bear my message." Accordingly the mace-bearer was despatched, and we amused ourselves until his return with examining the interior of the dewan-e-khass, and contemplating the extensive view which is seen from its northern verandah, across the Jumna, and over the Doab.

" It is in truth a noble city—a splendid and fitting capital, so far as I have seen, for an empire like that of Hindostan," said I, after gazing for a while upon the pregnant proofs of wealth and luxury, and taste, which greeted my eyes on every side.—" Ay!" replied Meer Hussun, " and when you have seen the whole of it, your admiration will be heightened rather than decreased, I warrant you; for its rarities, its beauty and variety of delights, are altogether inexhaustible.—Allah keep them undiminished! untarnished! if that may be!"—" Amen!" returned I: " it were pity to see these fair scenes injured or desolated: but that lies with our rulers. I have heard," continued I, willing to change the turn which these last observations might have given our discourse; " I have heard that no part of this city boasts of great antiquity; that ancient Dehlee lies almost deserted, at some distance from hence. Is this the case? how came it to be deserted?"—" What!" exclaimed Meer Hussun, " then you have never

* Mace-bearer.

heard the account of the origin of this city, which, in truth, is not *Dehlee*, but *Shahjehanabad* :—or rather, of how it was peopled?"—I professed my ignorance, and begged him to instruct me, which he did as follows:—

" You are to know," said he, " that the great Akber resided much more at the city of Agra, which he greatly embellished, and at Futtehpore Seekree, which he built, than at Dehlee, the ancient capital of the empire. Even his son Jehangeer never possessed a residence there befitting the splendour of his court, or the extent of his dominions. It was reserved for Shah Jehan, the most polished and most magnificent of monarchs, to provide a suitable abode for the emperor of Hindostan ; and he resolved to do so with a taste, and upon a scale, which should prove a monument more lasting and more gracious than the sanguinary achievements of his forefathers. With the help of the ablest engineers, among which it is said were numbered several Franks of high talent from the West, he projected the plan of the city, which was to be honoured with his august name. This palace was laid out and finished : the Jumah musjid, that wonder of the world, which cost, as we are told, ten crores of rupees,*

* Magnificent and immense as this building is, it seems as if upwards of ten millions sterling were too great a sum even for it to have cost.

with numerous other mosques, medressahs, and various public buildings were completed ; the walls stretched their protecting fence around the yet tenantless dwellings ; the streets were laid out in lines suited to the ground ; the houses were even built, and the gardens planted for the principal omrahs. All was finally completed, when the royal edict, like the decree of fate, went forth ; and in three days it is affirmed, old Dehlee, with many a surrounding suburb and village was depopulated ; while Shahjehanabad, as if the dust on its freshly formed streets had risen into life at the touch of a magician's wand, swarmed at once with a thronging, wondering multitude. Yet so complete, say historians, were the arrangements effected by the officers appointed to superintend the transmigration, that there was no confusion to be seen ; each family repaired at once to their future home, as if they had always inhabited it. Thus what formerly had been a populous neighbourhood, became at once almost a desert ; for the new city, itself of great size, absorbed an immense population ; and the court was a centre of attraction, which soon drew all stragglers to the suburbs, that rose like exhalations around the walls. It was upon this occasion that the wits of this court produced a couplet well known over all Hindostan for the fineness of its point and neatness of its flattery :

" Sud Jehan beabâd shoud
Ke ek Jehan abad shoud!" *

" An hundred worlds unpeopled were
That one might peopled be!".

" And excellent indeed it is," said I, " and the story is admirable.—Mashallah!—a little zubberdustee, indeed ; but nothing to our own Shah Abbas ; who by a single stroke of his secretary's pen would send fifty or sixty thousand families of Koords or Armenians from one end of his dominions to people a desert, or build up a new city at the other extremity ! But pray what is that grim-looking building yonder, which frowns like a stronghold of the olden time, or a prison of some deeve ?"

" Hum!—prison, indeed!" said Meer Hussun, with an expressive gesture. " Then it looks much like what it is ; that is Selim Gurb, an old Patan building erected by some of the Ghoree sovereigns, I believe ; perhaps as a royal residence : and such indeed it still remains, although in a different

* The point of this distich is lost by translation. The monarch's name, Shah Jehan, signifies "*king of the world*;" thus it turns on the word "*Jehan*," *world*; and may be rendered, "an hundred worlds were depopulated to people Shahjehanabad."

The rapidity with which this was effected may, no doubt, be exaggerated, although the facts are historical ; but it is to be remembered that the houses of the greater mass of the people are of very slight materials, and their furniture and goods trifling ; so that the difficulties of such a transmigration would not be so great as in other countries. The anecdote affords a fine illustration of the power of an absolute sovereign.

sense from its original intention. It is there that all members of the imperial family, from whom danger to the state may be apprehended, are confined: all supernumerary and too high-spirited princes, uncles, or brothers, likely to endanger the power or the life of a reigning prince, are sent to reside in that tranquil abode, where they may meditate at leisure on the vanities of the world they have left: for should their fortunate rival preserve his life and crown, there do they drag out the term of their existence. If turbulent or troublesome, the remedy administered is simple, consisting commonly in darkness or blood-letting: the former being exhibited by means of abstracting the orbs of vision; the latter involves the removal of the patient to a still quieter and narrower abode. Perhaps in Persia you may be acquainted with a similar practice?"—"Ay! ay!" replied I, looking askance at the gloomy prison, "we have heard of such things."—"But," continued he, "this fortress does not only serve as an asylum for the overflow of the royal family, but as a magazine from whence a monarch is sometimes drawn forth as you would take a suit of armour from an armoury. More than one of our emperors have issued from Selim Gurh; and although it must be allowed that its gloomy portals oftener open to entomb than to disgorge a living victim, the latter has not unfrequently been the case, particularly

during the troublesome times which preceded the present reign. But enough: the very talking of these things gives one an odd feeling about the neck. Let us speak of other matters: cast your eyes straightforwards — behold what a noble prospect opens before you!"

"Ay, even on this very stone," said Allee Verdee, pointing to a monstrous oval mass of rock crystal, a full *guz** in diameter and half a *guz* in height, which stood in the centre of the verandah, close to the marble-screened window,— "on this very stone was the wise and magnificent monarch who erected all these buildings wont to seat himself, and cast his royal eyes over yon extensive range of country; or, surrounded by his favourite officers, to amuse himself with observing the troops of the state performing their exercises upon that sandy plain below the walls; and here too it was he made that kingly reply to one of his omrahs, which doubtless, sir, has reached you?"—"I know not to what you allude," replied I. "I pray you tell it to me."—"The conversation," continued Allee Verdee, "having one day turned upon the splendour and perfections of the new-built palace, the emperor remarked in the face of one of the omrahs a peculiar expression of dissent to the general opinion, and inquired whether

* Yard.

he knew of any deficiency, any imperfection in the great work which was the subject of their conversation ? The omrah admitted, that in his opinion the work, however otherwise faultless, had yet one defect.—“ And what may that be ?” asked the monarch with some curiosity. “ Shadow of the Universe !” replied the omrah, “ what palace in the world can compare with this ? but where is the sahn, the spacious court with which it should be surrounded, which should lie spread in front of such a hall of audience as this ?”—“ Thou art mistaken,” replied the monarch calmly ; “ a fitting court has been provided : behold it !” added he, stretching forth his arm over the boundless plain beneath, “ it is the whole Doab :—let the earth produce a nobler.”

“ Ay,” said Meer Hussun, “ Shah Jehan was a king in thought and deed ; in word as well as action. What think you of another reply which he made, as it is said, to Prince Dara, who in the course of a similar conversation suggested certain defects in the situation of the new city and in the fortifications of the palace ? ‘ The city,’ observed the prince, ‘ is commanded from the neighbouring heights ; and as for the palace, the wall indeed is lofty and noble, but what a trifling ditch ! it is out of all proportion, and is scarcely to be considered a defence.’—‘ My son,’ replied the king, ‘ these are not my defences : my ditch

is a noble one :—it is the Attock on the north, and the Nerbuddah on the south ; and when either of these are forced, no fort that the king can erect here will avail for the safety of his empire.' Alas ! the saying was prophetic, and we have lived to prove its truth. But see, here is our messenger returned ; let us hear his news."

His report was favourable, and we proceeded forthwith to the Toisheh Khaneh, which was opened accordingly to our view by the naib, under inspection of my own comrade the Persian officer in trust, and which displayed to my astonished eyes a scene of splendour and an accumulation of wealth which not the wildest dream had ever imaged to my mind. But I cannot attempt to describe the heaps of precious things, the piles of gold and silver plate, the furniture for elephants and horses of every shape and kind, of velvet and gold glittering with gems ; the mighty howdahs covered with plates of massy gold, enamelled with precious stones in gorgeous flowers ; the canopies and umbrellas ; the glittering arms and armour ; the jewel-hilted scimitars, whose blades showed a water superior to the diamonds that adorned them ; the shields of silver and of damasked steel ; the heaps of apparel,—so bright, that they seemed one blaze of gold and gems ; the bales of shawls and brocades and other rich stuffs ; which lay in such abundance, that it

seemed as if the earth could furnish no more.— Then the caskets of jewels ; the necklaces of diamonds and of pearls, like pigeons' eggs, mingled with emeralds of such purity and lustre as the crystal fountain shows when flowing over the young herbage of spring ; sirpeshes and armlets of rubies, diamonds, and sapphires, and nameless ornaments, each of greater beauty and brilliance than another : these, and the splendid coffers containing, as I was informed, countless multitudes of unset and uncut gems, the gathered accumulation of ages from all the richest mines of the East ; these, I say, dazzled my eyes and bewildered my senses so completely, that I was unable to comprehend one half of what lay before me.

But the recollection even of all these gorgeous objects was effaced for the time, when the celebrated peacock throne, stript of its crimson silk covering, appeared before our eyes in all its blaze of splendour. Curiously however as I examined this wonderful monument of magnificence at this time, and frequently as I have since beheld it, I cannot attempt to describe it ; and perhaps a better idea may be gathered of its character from figuring a dazzling mass of gold and precious stones, raised but a little from the ground upon six golden feet, and disposed in forms that emulated in colour and in brilliancy the plumes of the bird, after which it has been named, than from

any more laboured description. I remember that two of these gorgeous images threw up their glowing plumage to join another which formed the canopy ; but the intricacy and glittering play of the work was such as to baffle every effort at minute examination ; and I came away from the place rather oppressed with the confusion and vastness of the riches and magnificence which had been displayed, than capable of recollecting any part of its details.

It would weary the reader were I to dwell any longer upon the endless wonders of this mighty palace. I therefore pass over the luxurious baths with their inlaid marble floors and gilded walls ; the beautiful private mosque ; the tusbeeh-khaneh, or place of private prayer, with its exquisite marble screens like network of flowers, communicating with the royal harem ; the endless variety and beautiful architecture of the various muhls, all entry to which, as being the female apartments, was impossible ; the spacious gardens, stocked with every sort of fruit and flower, and cooled by canals of clear water and spouting fountains, with their barah-durries and pleasure-houses of white marble ; these, and the interminable detail of accommodation for the royal family and its attendants ; the arsenals and magazines ; the workshops, chowks, and bazars, all perfect in their kind, must be left to the imagination of the reader, who

can figure nothing superior to the reality. And I shall only further say that, having at length seen all that could be seen, and being gorged even to satiety with the display of inexhaustible wealth and unimagined splendour of this wonderful palace, I returned to my humble quarters more fatigued than after many a long day's march or night of watchfulness.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TUMULT.

ON the morning of the 8th of March, while visiting the guards at the gates and the sentinels upon the walls, I remarked a chupper or courier, clad in the royal livery, approaching the Lahore gate. On demanding his dispatches, he informed me that they were addressed to the general himself: "But," added he, "I can inform your lordship thus far, that the emperor will enter the palace this very evening; and the king of kings, as I was informed, on the following morning."

Accordingly, before the sun was yet low, the dust of an approaching crowd was descried, in the direction of the Subzeemundee gardens; and soon after the imperial ambareh and chattah* were seen rising over the hill, and advancing among a glittering group of banners and spears. His ma-

* Ambareh is a canopied seat for an elephant, only used by the royal family; the chattah is the umbrella also used by them only.

jesty was attended not only by his own officers and servants, but by a strong party of Persian horsemen, who accompanied his person, not from motives of respect alone, although doubtless that was also intended, but with the view of reinforcing the troops already in Dehlee, and of suppressing any disposition to tumult which the appearance of their sovereign might excite in the turbulent populace of the city.

No such event however occurred at this time. The people indeed appeared rather to shrink from any expression of their sentiments: only a very few idle persons left their houses to gaze on the procession; and the emperor proceeded without interruption to the kallah, where he took up his abode as formerly in the boorge-e-Sooleymaun (or Solomon's tower). In like manner his principal officers were permitted to retain their usual quarters; and distinct suites of apartments were fitted up for the reception of his majesty the king of kings, when the kallah should be honoured with his presence.

This event was not long delayed; for ere the morrow's sun had enlightened the firmament, the earth and the city itself was shaken by the tread of his innumerable horsemen, and the horizon glittered with their spear-points and armour. In the midst of the advanced guard, consisting of twenty thousand of his guards and chosen troops,

came Nadir himself, seated after the fashion of India, in a splendid litter covered with a canopy of cloth of gold, supported on golden pillars: five hundred chaossnes in rich apparel ran before him shouting out the sounds of victory; and hundreds of green and crimson banners unfurled their silken folds around his person. Then came the sacred harem, from which men reverently turned away their faces; for the eye that dared to gaze upon the litters which contained the beauties that enchant the king of kings would surely have looked its last. But the monarch's humanity appointed heralds to announce its approach, and a guard of eunuchs to drive away intruders, while yet at a distance; so that the sacrifices to ignorance or to folly were on the whole but few.

The sun was scarcely three hours high when the shadow of the universe entered the august gate of the exalted palace. The personal guards, together with a portion of the troops, accompanied the presence; and the rest of the advance encamped under the walls of the kallah; but the bulk of the army took up its quarters on the retee, or sandy space upon the river bank below the walls of the town, and upon the rough ground which intervenes between the Cashmere gate and the rocky heights to the westward. Thus did this mighty conqueror seat himself almost without resistance upon the throne of the house of Timour,

and obtain undisputed and absolute possession of the richest capital in the universe.

It was a strange although an august spectacle to witness the meeting of these two mighty sovereigns, so lately foes, but now united in mutual offices of friendship ; the conquered saluting and congratulating his conqueror, as the host is bound to welcome an honoured guest ; while the latter bore himself with a gracious meekness and an expression of sincere benevolence, which gave every reasonable hope of lasting cordiality.

In truth, the acts of his majesty were of themselves sufficient to prove the sincerity of his goodwill towards the city and its inhabitants ; and there can be little doubt that, had faith been duly kept on their part, and the promised peishcush promptly and honestly paid, much blood and treasure would have been saved to Dehlee ; but fate had willed it otherwise.

Even while the two monarchs breakfasted together, seated upon the same musnud, and eating from the same dishes, in perfect confidence and friendship, Nadir seized the opportunity of issuing the most peremptory orders for the protection of the inhabitants and their property ; and threatening the severest punishments upon any who should insult or injure a citizen of Dehlee. He stationed nassakchees in various parts of the city, with orders to inflict the most summary chastisement

upon offenders ; to spare neither ears nor noses, nor the bamboo, nor the cord, if such severities should be found necessary. And such was the discipline of the Persian army, that for the two following days not an outrage of any sort was committed. Unfortunately the security which the people enjoyed appears to have emboldened and excited them to acts of madness : they probably misinterpreted the cause of the forbearance by which they profited ; and were thus tempted to take advantage of the supposed weakness of their enemies. Alas ! they were miserably undeceived.

On the following day Saadut Khan, the sou-bahdar of Oude, and one of the principal noblemen of the kingdom, departed this life, to the regret of all who knew him. He was the person who, it was said, from pique towards Nizam-ul-Moolk, had suggested to Nadir Shah the possibility of obtaining from the emperor a much larger subsidy than that originally proposed by the minister. He found in the sequel that greater exertions on his part were expected than were in his power to make : he had already endured the displeasure of his majesty, for venturing to speak in dubious terms as to the possibility of collecting this subsidy, which he himself had been the means of demanding ; and it is probable that mortification and chagrin at the consequences of his mistaken policy had combined with the effects of his wounds

to exasperate a natural infirmity, and hasten his dissolution.

Next day, a memorable one in the history of Dehlee, was the tenth of the moon, and the feast of the Eede-ul-kourbaun. On this occasion the khootbeh, or form of prayer, was recited in all the mosques in the name of Nadir Shah, king of kings, and lord of the time. In the palace, however, the sovereigns and their ministers were anxiously engaged in making arrangements for the public safety, as well as in debating on the means for raising the stipulated subsidy, now finally fixed at twenty crores of rupees.*

The unfair advantage taken by the possessors of grain stores, by which the price of provision was raised unduly high, was a subject which also received the attention of his majesty; and a small detachment of troops accompanied by some nassakchees, was sent to the pahr-gunge, or grain market, in order to regulate the price and insure a sufficient supply. And there is no doubt that these precautions would have been effectual, had not the owners, blinded by avarice and stimulated by certain incendiaries, first proceeded to angry remonstrances at this interference, and from that to actual violence; and so great was the tumult, that not only the nassakchees on duty, but several soldiers who had come peaceably to purchase

* Upwards of twenty-two millions sterling.

grain, were put to death. The perpetrators then, fearful of consequences, dispersed ; but it was only to spread the seeds of disturbance and outrage over a wider extent.

Ignorant of what had happened, I had passed the earlier part of the evening with my friends Meer Hussun Khan and Allee Verdee Beg, at the house of the latter, who had entertained me with a private nautch ; and I was about to retire to my quarters under the walls of the Loll Kallah, when our attention was arrested by the distant sound of shouts, and the trampling of many feet, mingled with the report of fire-arms and cries of distress.—“What means this?” exclaimed I ; “here is surely something wrong.”—“Oh no,” said one of my friends, “only some fellows who have been making free at the arrack or toddy shops, and are quarrelling with the guards on their way home.”—“It cannot be,” said I with awakening apprehension ; “that is the sound of a multitude, not of a few drunkards ;—and hark ! it comes this way. Stafferullah ! the city’s in an uproar ; I must go and see to keep the peace.”—“Stay, stay, Khan ! from the top of this house you may see all that is going on ; it cannot be any thing of consequence ; but better do so than run any foolish risk.”

Up we went ; and from the lofty terrace of the roof were witnesses to a spectacle which justified my worst alarm. From our elevated station we

overlooked a great portion of the city, and some of its principal streets; the chandnee chowk, the Rah-shahee, and the Dareebah, with the bazars around the Jumah mosque, were quite under our eyes. Along these streets were now hurrying many groupes of people; some armed, who ran with furious gestures; others, on the contrary, flying with every symptom of alarm, as if from some danger that was pursuing them. In the broad street of the chandnee chowk the crowd was particularly great, and the current of its course—for it too was in rapid motion—set directly towards the palace. Many among them carried torches, which threw a red and partial glare upon the confused masses, flashing restlessly upon arms, and at times discovering the figures of both Hindoos and Persians mingled among each other; but a single glance was sufficient to convince us that the latter were unwilling and helpless parties in the tumult; for even at the distance we stood, we could see the heavy blows which they received, and which soon stretched them breathless upon the street, where they were trampled under foot by the living torrent.

“ Merciful God! what can all this mean?” cried I: “ what frantic violence are these wretches committing? Are they mad?—But we must check their folly: this insane tumult must be quelled: the troops before the palace gate are sufficient

for it;" and I was rushing down the stairs when my friend caught hold of me.—“Stay, khan!—you must not go;—you would throw your life away fruitlessly;—we see how it is. The infatuated desperadoes who put to death the nas-sakchees at the pahr-gunge are at work here; these turbulent fellows, Seyed Neaz and Shah Sowar Khan, are at the bottom of all this mischief; but you cannot reach the kallah now; it would be madness to attempt it:—wait here till morning—we will protect you.”—“Wait till morning, and see them cut my soldiers' throats!” exclaimed I. “Off!—unhand me!—I will not wait a moment. Let me go, or by the might of Allah I will sacrifice you. What! traitors are ye?” and my hand was on my sword.—“Listen to me, sir!” said Allee Verdee with perfect composure, and without attempting a defensive gesture, “you have placed your servant under an obligation which insures his gratitude, and you may rely on his firm attachment. Were we traitors, there are armed men enough about us to secure our worst object; but we are true men, and your sincere friends. If you go into the streets to-night with that dress, you will undoubtedly be murdered; fruitlessly sacrificed. If you *will* risk your life, at least do not fling it wantonly away; put on an Indian dress, and in it you may possibly escape the observation of our

furious countrymen ;—from the Kuzzilbashes you run no danger.”

The earnest sincerity of his manner and the good sense of his advice dispelled in a moment the thrill of suspicion which had shot through my breast, and I was just about to express my sense of his friendly anxiety and to accept his offer, when fresh and reiterated shouts again startled us ; and the glare of several fires bursting up in different quarters in rapid succession, illuminated the whole scene of tumult and bloodshed. The crowd was thickening in the streets and avenues near the palace, and the quick rattle of musketry around it and from the lofty walls, as well as from those of the inclosed buildings in the neighbourhood, was mingled occasionally with the louder roar of a cannon, the flash of which glanced like lightning upon the lurid darkness. “ Ye are honest and sincere friends I believe,” said I hastily; “ but my duty is yonder, and, live or die, yonder must I be ; so, quick ; give me the dress :—my brave fellows ! it is worse than death to stand idle here and see ye falling under the blows of these treacherous miscreants.”—“ The dress is here at hand,” said Allee Verdee, “ and we will go with you : we may do more good in this affair than you can do.”—“ Thanks, thanks ; but do not expose yourselves ; stay and protect your house ; if I live ye shall know me for your friend.” But

they would not be persuaded ; so having hastily thrown over my own dress a Hindee coortee and shawl, with a turban instead of the military cap, and taking our arms, we quitted the house, and soon gained the main street.

My first object being to gain the palace gate, we descended the chandnee chowk towards it ; but the crowd became so dense and the uproar so furious towards its lower extremity, that it was impossible to make our way, and we were forced to have recourse to a more circuitous path. My heart burned within me, as at every four or five paces the flaring light fell upon the body of a Kuzzilbash lying lifeless, and dreadfully mangled, trampled on by the unceasing current of armed men, who in the wantonness of carnage tried their swords, as they passed, on the inanimate objects of their fury.

The increasing crowd having forced us into a narrow lane, we found ourselves passing the wall of a considerable mansion, from the open gateway of which a number of people had just come forth to join the rioters. A red smoky glare attracted our attention as we passed this gateway ; and upon looking in, we were amazed to observe that one of the buildings contained within the walls had been reduced to a heap of smouldering embers. "Great God ! what can this mean ?" exclaimed Meer Hussun ; "this is the coatee of

Seyed Neaz Khan :—who can have done this?”—“ Of Seyed Neaz Khan ?” repeated I, now first recollecting the name ; “ surely it was he who solicited and received a guard of soldiers and nassakchees for the safety of his house and property, and that of his father-in-law, Kummer-u-deen Khan. How can any harm have happened here ? —let us inquire into the matter.”

The court was nearly deserted ; a few idle stragglers alone remained, and they were gazing upon the ruins of the building, which we now discovered to be a detached out-house, and upon the bodies of two or three men scattered near it. What were my feelings when I discovered among them more than one of those very nassakchees who had been sent to protect the house ! Burning for an explanation of this mysterious affair, I ran to one after another of the bodies to see if life was quite extinct in all. There was but one poor wretch who still breathed, although terribly mangled and scorched : he even knew my voice and features as I bent over him, and called upon him by name. “ Ah, khan ! ” murmured he, in scarcely intelligible tones, “ these Hindees are pitiless traitors ! all of us are murdered—murdered by the khan’s own orders ; cut down and burnt without mercy, while we thought of nothing but doing our duty and defending his property—may his father burn

in hell ! But tell the shah to trust none of them : and, oh ! let him revenge his poor soldiers ! ”

His broken words conveyed the truth, which was afterwards most fully proved. Seyed Neaz Khan, one of the promoters of this wicked and fruitless commotion, had been the first to set on fire the quarters assigned by himself to the guards, whom he had received for the protection of his property, cutting down or shooting such of them as attempted to escape from the flames. The tragedy had been just completed as we reached the place, and the khan with his attendants had left it to seek for other victims.

Vowing a deep and bloody revenge on all concerned, I quitted the spot, still followed by my two companions, and made another attempt to reach the Loll Kallah. But every alley was effectually choked up by maddened crowds, shouting, shrieking, brandishing their arms, and cutting to pieces every luckless Iraunee, either single or in parties, whose evil stars threw him in their way. As we approached the kallah the dead bodies of my countrymen became alarmingly numerous ; and I began to tremble for the fate of those troops who had been encamped before the gateway, and who, unaided and taken unawares, might not, as I feared, have been able to stand their ground against so infuriated a multitude ; but it fortunately happened,

as I afterwards learned, that the greater part of that body succeeded in joining their companions below the town-walls upon the retee, or in effecting a retreat into the palace itself: such as failed in these attempts were cut off to a man.

But now a more terrible rumour arose; a rumour which, had it been well founded, would not only have proved the warrant of fate to the whole Persian army, but would have plunged the whole kingdom of Iraun into confusion and despair. The cry was heard among the multitude, “ Nadir is dead!—the accursed dog is dead!—kill, kill the Kuzzilbashes—put the ———s to death;” and with the madness of frenzy they launched into every atrocious term of abuse which their language so copiously supplies. My very blood ran cold as I listened to this fearful report, the truth of which I scarce saw room to question; for was not the commotion which we were then witnessing a speaking proof of the fact?—who, if Nadir were alive, would have dared to promote so unpardonable an outrage?—and who, on the other hand, could have ventured to publish so bold and dangerous a falsehood?

My companions knew not what to say: they sought to convince me of my personal safety; but that was the least of my cares. They swore to save and protect me—to cherish me like a brother. But all I longed for was to join my surviving

countrymen and share their fate; and that was for the time impracticable. At length my frantic exclamations and wild gestures, for I was no longer master of myself, attracted the notice of the fluctuating crowd about us, notwithstanding the tumult, which reigned among themselves. My dress too had been disordered with my struggles to get forward, and the garb of Persia beneath it became visible to their eyes. In a moment the cry was up, "Iraunee! Dek, ho Iraunee!—Mar—maro B—s," and their lifted weapons flashed in my eyes. As if I had been a mad dog, whom all men are bound to kill, they rushed upon me, and another moment would have numbered me among the victims of the night. The courage and presence of mind of my two companions saved me: they echoed the cry: "Kill! kill the cursed Iraunee," shouted they; and their weapons, while they appeared to fall faster and harder upon me than any of the rest, in fact warded off the better-aimed blows of others. In another instant I was hustled down and the crowd, after closing over me for a while, and raining a shower of ineffectual blows upon me until they believed that life was extinct, retreated to seek other subjects for their fury.

My friends thus left with me, covered me with a shawl taken hastily from Meer Hussun's waist, and drew me to a side: half stunned, I scarcely remembered what had happened; and the voice of

Allee Verdee had just time to whisper in my ear, “ Make back for my house;—stay not here a moment, if you value your life;” when another rapid fluctuation of the crowd, occasioned I believe by a charge of some of the unhappy Kuzzilbashes, who fought hard for their lives, divided me from them; and incapable at the moment of any resistance, I was hurried with the stream some fifty yards backwards against a row of huts, the dwellings of kuhars* and other low caste menials. A fierce struggle took place here; in the course of which, still helpless from the pressure of the crowd, I sustained some blows about the head, which thoroughly stunned me; and I neither saw nor felt any thing more.

When my senses returned, the uproar and tumult was as loud as ever; but it had rolled away from my immediate neighbourhood, and I was quite alone. The rush of the crowd had crushed and destroyed a portion of the huts I have mentioned, involving me in their ruins; and I now found myself lying, half smothered in mats and rotten thatch, upon a heap of sun-dried bricks and mud, which had formed part of the wall of a hut. It was still dark, except when the flash of a cannon or a musket, or the flame of a distant conflagration threw a faint or momentary glare over the confusion around me. Rising with difficulty, and look-

* Palankeen-bearers, a particular caste.

ing abroad, I could only see the raging Hindoos, who still barred all access to the fort. The tents of our men were totally gone, and nothing remained to indicate the place of their encampment except some tattered rags, and certain objects which might be bodies of the dead, scattered here and there over the ground.

In this state of things I had sufficient recollection to consider that no good could be effected by me : I had escaped death, as it were, miraculously ; and the folly of uselessly throwing life away was sufficiently obvious even to my clouded imagination. I therefore resolved to lie still where I was until the light of morning should determine my future motions.

Tedious and painful were the hours that intervened till morning broke. Far from decreasing, the tumult seemed to gather force, and I was astonished that no effort seemed to be making from the palace to quell the disturbance. It afforded an ominous confirmation of the fatal report which had been spread : but it seemed amazing that Thahmaseb Khan, Hadjee Beg Khan, and others of the general officers who were either with the troops upon the retee, or had quarters within the palace, should not make a single demonstration for the relief of their friends or for their own safety.

Resolved at all hazards to know the worst, as

the first grey light of dawn appeared I arranged my tattered Indian garb as well as I could, and emerging from my concealment, discovered that the mob, having effected the destruction of the camp before the palace gates, and of every individual belonging to it whom they could catch, had retreated from the fire to which they were exposed from the walls and upper part of the gateway, and were gone in search of other objects. Of this respite I took immediate advantage; and crossing the open space, now abandoned by all except a few straggling and flying groupes, at the hazard of being shot from the walls, I ran straight to the gate of the kallah. That danger was by no means small; for several musket-balls flew past me, and one went through my clothes. But waving my turban with one hand, and tearing off my Hindostanee robe with the other, I made signals, which after a few seconds attracted notice, and gained the wicket without further opposition. Fortunately my voice was immediately recognised by the guard within, who opened the wicket before any of the straggling Hindees could injure me.

“The shah! the shah!” exclaimed I, breathlessly, as soon as the gate closed behind me;—“is it true?—is he dead?”—“May God avert it, khan!” replied the officer on duty; “the king is well:—but from whence are you?—how have you escaped these dogs?”—“I cannot tell;—I must

to the shah :”—and without another word, faint and tattered as I was, I rushed forward, followed by two officers, towards the dur-khaneh of the presence.

Nadir, who had from the first been made acquainted with the progress of the tumult, but whose sagacity discovered greater risk to his troops and his own interest from a night alarm and skirmish, in a town where his enemies possessed all the advantage of knowing their ground, than from any injury that could be done in a single night by the fury of a disorderly mob, had issued strict orders that all his men should hold themselves cautiously within their respective camps instead of making vain attempts to assist or relieve their countrymen. The consequence of this prudence was, that the loss was confined to those who had straggled abroad, and such as having been detached as guards throughout the city fell victims to the treachery of the natives, whose persons and property they were protecting from violence. From the palace, the various camps, and such houses of the nobility as had received sufficient parties, the mob had been effectually and readily repelled; and the king remained quietly in his own apartments during the whole of this tumultuous night, resolving that morning should witness a signal punish-

ment upon the instigators and ringleaders of the riot.

I reached the dur-khaneh just as he was quitting the underoon to enter the public hall of audience. Upon announcing my name, the attendants, comprehending that I came with news of the operations without the walls, gave me instant admittance in spite of my disordered dress; so that almost before I was aware I found myself in presence of my sovereign. At the first moment even his keen eye failed to recognise me; nor was it to be wondered at: my Hindostanee dress still hung partly in tatters about my person, stained with dust and blood from the petty wounds and bruises I had received in my struggles; and the military Persian dress peeped out from beneath it. I was bareheaded, except that, in decency, I had wrapped the fragment of a shawl around my brows; and my face and arms were stained like my garments. So uncouth and suspicious was my whole appearance, that the king, who had cause enough for jealousy, half started when he saw me, and put his hand to his sword:—"How now, slaves? what fellow is this?—what is his business?—Ismael!" continued he, recovering his calmness as my low and distant obeisance relieved his suspicions, and a second glance conveyed to him the truth.—"From whence come you?—and how are

you thus?"—" Escaped, your majesty!—escaped from that swarm of traitors without."—" How ? were you abroad ?"—" I was, Shadow of the Universe ! and stand here perhaps the only living Persian of all who at nightfall yesterday remained beyond the kallah or the limits of these camps.—The bodies of our soldiers lie slaughtered and trampled under foot in hundreds about the streets : slain, too, in the very houses and by the very men whose lives and properties they were given to protect."—" How, slave ! what mean you ?" thundered Nadir, with a darkening brow ; —" speak ! who can have dared ?"—" My lord, I know not how many may have sinned thus ; one foul instance met my own eye ; and that others have occurred is certain : I heard the rioters boasting of these acts as of praiseworthy feats :"— and then I related the scene which I had witnessed in the coatee of Seyed Neaz Khan ; with every thing else that had happened to myself.— " By the holy Kaaba !—by my father's soul !" muttered the monarch from between his set teeth : he restrained himself, however ; but the terrible frown which corrugated his forehead, and the fierce glances which shot from under his knitted brow foretold a bloody storm.

" Let the king's horse be brought ; and let the Aitomad-u-doulut, Thahmaseb Khan, Lootf Allee

Khan, Sirdar Beg Khan, and Syf-u-deen Khan, attend the presence instantly.—Ismael, it is well you are safe:—dress and arm immediately, and attend us at the cotewal's chiboutra in the Chandnee chowk.” With these words his majesty arose, and I retired to obey his commands.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MASSACRE.

THE short delay which took place in summoning these officers, and mustering a sufficient body of troops, enabled me to join the shah before he quitted the palace gateway. His countenance was now perfectly calm. Stern and inflexible resolution was alone to be read in the deep composure of his eye and brow. His officers in vain sought to penetrate their sovereign's council ; they looked at each other in anxious silence ; or communicated their surmises in cautious whispers as they rode behind his person.

That both officers and men of our army should be eager to revenge the fate of their slaughtered comrades upon the treacherous authors of their death, was not less natural than that their leader should be sensibly alive to so gross an outrage on his authority : but whatever might be his private feelings on the subject, it seems probable,

that motives of prudence and policy, if not of justice and mercy, disposed him at first to measures of conciliation rather than of severity. Certainly such were the impressions conveyed by the first commands that were issued this morning, although the first objects which met his eye were little calculated to inspire forbearance.

As we issued from the gateway, the ground on either side was strewed with the wreck of what had been the encampment of his troops ; and many of the bodies, stript and mangled into bloody and deformed masses, lay scattered about. A rapid and peculiar glance was all the acknowledgement he vouchsafed to these ghastly tokens of the tumult : but as he passed onwards to the Chandnee chowk, and saw the corses of his soldiers lying yet more thickly strewed in the street, he called his officers, and gave them rapid orders to spread, with strong bodies of troops in every direction, and endeavour to allay the ferment by mild and persuasive means : to assure the people, that so far was the report of his death from being correct, that Nadir was alive, and prepared alike to punish or reward ; and to warn all the citizens, as they valued their lives, to repair instantly to their respective habitations. If these means should fail, they were then to have recourse to more coercive measures, and to put down force by force.

But even in that case, he cautioned them to use the strong hand only where positive resistance should leave no other alternative, and to beware of making the innocent suffer with the guilty. Such were the instructions with which Nadir dismissed his officers ; and when his situation is considered, —a king and conqueror in a foreign land, where so much depended upon the maintenance of his authority, and the influence of opinion, his claim for moderation and mercy can scarcely be denied.

Having made these arrangements, he rode straight to the mosque of Roshun-u-doulut in the Chandnee chowk, and ordering a horse-cloth to be spread upon its elevated terrace, from whence he could overlook the whole street, he seated himself upon it, and calmly awaited the event.

Our suspense did not continue long, though the result was as unlooked for as unwelcome. The insurgents, instead of being awed by the approach of the military, and dispersing as soon as they had an opportunity of seeing the serious consequences to which their folly must expose them, appeared still to mistake the motives of the lenity which spared them, and to imagine that they had inspired their conquerors with an alarm which might terminate in their final discomfiture. In this manner alone could their frantic conduct be accounted for ; as they replied to the remonstrances of our officers with flights of arrows and

volleys of matchlock-balls; while from the terraced house-tops the inhabitants flung stones and other missiles upon those who only thought of how to spare them: even the spot where the shadow of the universe himself had taken up his station was not spared by the blind fury of the rioters; several of his soldiers, at no great distance, while strictly observing the forbearance which had been enjoined them, were killed or wounded by their fire, and stones from the neighbouring house-tops fell upon the very terrace where he was seated.

We, who stood around his august person, could distinctly trace the struggle which he maintained with his rising passion, and marked the grave serenity of his brow gradually darkening into the well-known ominous frown:—"These madmen are resolved to drag down the sword upon their own necks," said he, turning to Cossim Beg Khan; "they will not heed the muttering of the storm till they feel the force of the thunderbolt. I would fain spare them; but they will not let me be merciful." Scarce had he said the words when a matchlock-ball, fired from an opposite window, and evidently aimed at the person of his majesty, who had that moment risen to his feet, slightly grazed his shoulder, and passing onwards, entered the breast of Syf-u-deen Khan, a favourite Affghaun officer, and stretched him

dead upon the spot. Nadir cast one gloomy look upon the body of his favourite, then stepping one pace forward :—"The lot is cast," said he ; "it is the will of Allah !—These dogs are mad for blood, and they shall have enough of it : they had to choose between Nadir the benefactor, and Nadir the destroyer ; and they have made their choice." With these words he issued rapid but distinct orders to the officers in attendance to repair with all dispatch to the several corps, to revoke every moderate and conciliatory instruction they might have received, and to give a loose to bloodshed, and rapine, and plunder :—"Let them kill, ravish, and destroy ; and woe be to them if they spare either age or sex!"*

No one ventured—perhaps none cared, to remonstrate ; for all were equally exasperated at the treachery under which our comrades had suffered ; while those among us who permitted themselves to reason on the subject, were probably convinced that a severe example was necessary to check the dangerous spirit which had displayed itself so widely in the capital.

But however powerful might have been our motives for revenge, it was scarcely possible to listen with indifference to the command, which was to hurl bloodshed and carnage among a mul-

* Kuttul-e-aum, a "public massacre," was his expression.

titude like that around us, mad, misguided, and incapable of resisting a force such as was now to be let loose against them ; to desolate a populous city, and to destroy the splendid monuments of human industry which had so lately attracted our admiration. There was a fearful and a breathless pause as the troops spurred away to their murderous duty ; and we looked at each other in silence : but a few minutes changed the scene, and awakened us to our stern duties. The soldiers, freed from all restraint, now charged full amongst the disorderly crowd, which scarcely crediting or comprehending the nature of the assault, stood aghast and motionless for a moment, and then broke and fled, while their pursuers followed at speed, cutting, trampling under foot, and mowing them unresistingly down : the shouts of defiance which had filled the air were changed in a moment to shrieks of despair and anguish. In the twinkling of an eye, as it seemed, the streets, which had swarmed with living men, were covered with dead and bleeding bodies ; and their destroyers thirsting for other prey, passed onwards, and left only their desolated track behind.

In this way did the slaughter rage throughout every street and bazar in the city ; it spread even to the suburbs, extending over a space of many miles in diameter ; but the storm fell hea-

vient upon the quarters in the neighbourhood of the Jumah mosque, including the cotton and the jewellers' bazars, with that of the khanum. These were totally plundered, and almost entirely destroyed by fire.

To describe the consternation and despair which reigned throughout this great city during the infliction of this terrible, though merited punishment, would be impossible. Aroused from their extravagant, but fatal dream, the rioters awoke to a full consciousness of their madness and its dreadful consequences, when too late to prevent them : but, unhappily, the weight of the blood fell rather upon the innocent than on the guilty ; for the principal instigators of the disturbance, Shah Sowar Khan, Seyed Neaz Khan, and Rahiban Nazir, with their dependants and followers, as soon as they observed the smallest chance of a reaction, retired, and left the storm to burst upon the helpless and innocent inhabitants. Men, women, and children, old and young, high and low, fell indiscriminately under the sword ;—even the very animals were not spared ; and maimed horses and cattle were mingled in bloody heaps with gasping human beings.

In less than an hour the smoke of many fires were seen ascending in various quarters, which, mingling with the dust of the struggling parties

and falling houses, and with the smoke of fire-arms, formed a dense cloud over the devoted city.. Some of these fires were accidental ; some, the effect of wanton mischief ; but others were the act of the inhabitants themselves, who, frantic and despairing at the prospect which awaited them, collected their family and effects together, and setting fire to their houses, buried themselves and all they possessed beneath the ruins. The Hindoos, especially, when they saw the soldiers approaching, and knew the fate which awaited their women, would cut their throats with their own hand; and piling their bodies upon the terraces, set fire to the whole heap, and leave nothing to the plunderers but burning embers and blackened carcasses. In other cases, again, when the storm had passed over, leaving perhaps one individual alive, he would perform the same duties to his murdered family, and, ripping up his own bowels upon the pile, consume himself along with them.

These scenes had scarcely commenced when, according to the royal mandate, I proceeded to the quarter of which the punishment was committed to my charge. This lay between the Jumah Musjid and the Toorkoman and Ajmere gates : but before a blow was struck I resolved, at all hazards, to perform one act of justice ; and making my way with all expedition to the house

of Allee Verdee Beg, I placed within it a guard of trusty soldiers with a written order of protection to secure it and its inmates from the fate of others around it. At the entrance I was met by Allee Verdee himself, who, after losing sight of, and seeking me in vain, after the affray at the palace, had retired to his house, resolved to have no share in so mad a commotion. He started in astonishment at sight of one whom he had looked upon as sacrificed, in spite of his efforts, to the fury of the insurgents ; but expressed unfeigned delight at learning the truth. I had only time to caution him against stirring out of doors ; and conjuring him to trust implicitly for protection to the party posted in his premises, I left him, loading me with blessings. In the house of Saadut Khan there was a sufficient guard already ; so that, considering the safety of my other friend, Meer Hussun, as provided for, I had only left to carry into execution the bloody orders with which I was charged.

There is little of the wolf or of the hyena in my disposition naturally : although inured to blood by profession, I never delighted in carnage ; and I loathe the very thought of harming the weak or the unresisting. The bloody work we were ordered to perform was not to be done in the furious excitement of an assault, or in the heat of a battle : Dehlee was no beleaguered city, garrisoned with

hostile troops, defying our power; it was against men who had submitted, who, although there were some among them that merited the severest chastisement for their mad and treacherous conduct, were for the most part peaceable merchants, industrious mechanics, humble peasants: it was against weak, helpless women and innocent children that the sword was to be drawn. I was alive to the full horror of the measure, and sickened with disgust at what I was unable to prevent.

It was a dreadful thing to hear the shrieks, and see the frantic gestures of the flying wretches, as, driven in crowds before the Persian soldiers, they ran from bazar to bazar, and from street to street. Taken almost wholly unawares, few of the multitude which occupied the streets could find refuge at the moment in their houses; for those within were afraid to unbar their doors, even for a moment, to admit the fugitives. Not indeed that bars or bolts availed much; for the soldiery with bars of iron, and beams of wood torn from the shattered and burning houses, broke open every place that resisted, and their spears and swords soon detected the hiding wretches: they were dragged shrieking from their concealment, and their fate was sealed.

Many a one, maddened by the harrowing scenes they saw, became in a moment deserted by reason, and acted the parts of frantic madmen. Some

would call aloud from the tops of the houses, and attract a fatal notice by cursing the soldiers in the streets, with furious imprecations ; others, catching up their own children, while screaming with affright around their knees, would dash them down headlong, like missile weapons, among the assailants, who replied to these fearful acts by shouts of savage applause. I saw one miserable creature, whose dwelling was just then broken open, sitting naked and bloody amongst a pile of still writhing bodies ; they were those of his women and children, whose bellies he had ripped open with his own hands ; and as the soldiers entered he grinned and chattered like an ape, beckoning them with wild gestures to advance, and pointed to the reeking carcasses around him.

In another house they were stoutly resisting their fate. It was the dwelling of a Patan. I knew him by his peculiar turban, his keen grey eye, his flowing beard, and proud unyielding port. He was wielding his single tulwar against three huge Koords, while near him a noble-looking youth, his son probably, unarmed, was parrying the quick spear-thrusts of another ruffian. The old man was hewn down almost at the moment I entered the place ; at the same time a curtained door-way was flung open, and a lovely young woman, all unveiled and disordered in her dress, flew shrieking forwards, and clasped the youth in her arms.

That act of affection was the seal of his fate ; for turning quick at the sound, the spear of his adversary entered his now unguarded side, grazing the girl's arm as she threw it round his body. He fell with a heavy groan, and his murderer dashed forward to seize the still shrieking female. I could contain myself no longer. "Back, brute !—back, devil !—Let the woman alone !—you dare not touch her *now*!" He released her at the sound of my voice, and she fell upon the body of her lover, or her husband, I know not which. "Houssein ! Houssein !" exclaimed she in piercing accents, "will you not speak ?—Speak to me, for the love of God!"—But hearing no sound, and feeling no motion, she started to her knee, turned round towards us, passed her bloody arm across her brow, as if to clear her sight, and gazed around her for a moment with a bewildered air ; then turning once more to the body, she snatched from his girdle the peishcubz which he wore, and before we were aware of her intention plunged it twice deep into her side, exclaiming, "Ai Houssein; I go with thee." The blows were fatally well aimed ; she fell clasping his body ; and after a few convulsive struggles, was still as himself.

The fate of another individual which came under my own notice, if scarcely so affecting, was at least more singular. A wealthy Hindoo shroff, who lived in a lane not far from the Daree-

bah, observing the parties of the military swarming in the quarter about his house, in despair resolved, like many others, to save his honour, and prevent the prolonged sufferings of his family, by anticipating their work. Mustering therefore together, the females of his household, who, strange as it may appear, in such cases not only consented to, but courted their fate, from the hands of their fathers or husbands, as the only means of escaping pollution, he put every one to death with his own hands: then, assisted by a single servant, he made a pile with all the wood he could collect in the house, and ranging the bodies upon it, set it on fire, and consumed the whole to ashes. After which he calmly seated himself in the court of his house, opposite the door-way, and awaited the coming of the soldiers.

But the time passed on, and the soldiers did not appear. On the contrary, party after party passed by without molesting, probably without observing the house. Confounded, and even enraged at this unaccountable neglect after all his dreadful preparations, and doubtless bewildered in his brain by the occurrences he had witnessed, he resolved, that rather than be disappointed, he would invite the anticipated catastrophe. Accordingly, he went in search of the nearest party of soldiers, whom he actually guided back to his own house, under the assurance that they would

find its plunder worth their while. Plundered and destroyed, therefore, it very soon was ; but still, by some extraordinary chance, not one of the party thought of molesting their guide. This, however, was a forbearance which the poor shroff had neither contemplated nor desired. He prayed them to put him to death ; but from some caprice or other they refused to comply with his request. Even the torrents of abuse which he poured forth against them failed of their object ; and the soldiers went their way laughing loudly at his folly. "Then nothing is left me but this," he said ; and plunging his kutharee into his own bowels, he threw himself upon the smouldering pile which contained the ashes of his family.

For six long hours did the slaughter rage unchecked ; and scenes like these I have described prevailed in every street and corner of the capital. About that time, when the cries were becoming more faint, and the blows less frequent, as food for the sword began to fail, while wandering sadly through the gorged and slippery streets, my attention was arrested by a broad sheet of flame which arose from the interior of a large building, near the Durgah Huzrut Toorkan, and which, in spite of the conflagration, was surrounded by a number of soldiers, struggling hard as it appeared for admittance. Surprised at their perseverance in what seemed to be at least a bootless contest, I ap-

proached to learn the cause of it. "What are ye about, men?" said I: "can ye not employ your time to better purpose than in fighting for a burning ruin?"—"By your own head, khan, I swear," replied one, "if you knew its contents you would allow it to be well worth risking a burned coat or a broken head for. By the soul of my father, sir, there is more riches and beauty within these four walls than in half the bazars of Dehlee put together."—"Whatever may have been there," replied I, "there will soon be little to boast of, I think:" and I was moving onward, when just as I spoke, a large portion of the front wall fell inwards, discovering to view a terrace, upon which was heaped a vast pile of carcasses, chiefly those of women, mingled with beams of wood and broken furniture, clothes, skins of ghee, and other combustible matters. An old man, who wore the zennar or Brahminical cord, was busily employed in heaping these together, regardless of the flames which now burst forth in forked volumes from all parts of the building. Clouds of dust and smoke rose from the fallen wall, shrouding the interior with all its contents from view; and my gaze turned instinctively downwards to the entrance, in which (his figure in strong relief against the bright flames behind him) stood a young man of fair complexion, and a tall, elegant figure, who with nothing but a kutharee in one hand, and a shield on the other

arm; was defending the passage against a dozen of soldiers, who pushed at him with their spears, and cut at him with their swords. His jet-black hair streamed loose behind him; a yellow-tinged muslin shawl, stained with blood and smoke, was thrown around his shoulders; the only other article of dress he wore was a cotton dhotee or waistcloth, which covered his loins and thighs; yet with these simple arms and this slight dress, had his skill and activity defended him against the formidable weapons and practised hands of his numerous assailants. Wounded though he was in many places, he still fiercely and undauntedly defended the entrance, as if there had been a spell within, the influence of which at once stimulated his courage and maintained his strength.

Such determined gallantry and skill united to so noble a form excited my admiration, and I resolved to save him from the fury of the soldiers. But this proved a less easy matter than I anticipated; for spurning at all offers of quarter, the more the men, at my desire, hung back, the more fiercely did he press upon them; and all my good intentions would have probably been in vain had not the young man's foot slipped while making a furious bound, which threw him forward upon one of the soldiers' out-stretched spears. It pierced through his right arm, inflicting also a severe wound on the side, and he fell heavily to the ground, without

sense or motion. Seeing that the wound, though severe, was not likely to be fatal, I took advantage of his disabled state, and had him conveyed by two of the soldiers to the house of Allee Verdee Beg, with directions to have him carefully attended.

By this time the flames had spread over the whole building ; part after part fell in, and terrace, pile, and Brahmin, with all its other contents, had sunk among the glowing ruins. The entrance was choked up by an impervious mass of burning matter ; and the soldiers having given up the point, went in search of other prey. Thoroughly disgusted, I continued my painful round of duty, until turning again into the Chandnee chowk, I was accosted by a mounted messenger, who was spurring full speed from the kallah ; and it was no small relief to know that his orders were to stop the massacre, and sheath the sword of vengeance.

Nadir, after issuing the fatal command, which deluged the capital with blood, remained little more than an hour on the station he had chosen gloomily witnessing the execution of his orders. He then retired to his apartments in the Loll Kallah, where he occupied himself in ordinary business, regardless of the cries and shrieks which penetrated even to the recesses of the palace.

Far otherwise was it with the unhappy Mahomed Shah. Trembling for himself and for his

family, and wrung with anguish at the fate of his wretched subjects and his splendid capital, yet not daring to make any effort to save them, he sat in the retirement of his khelwut, attended by Nizam-ul-Moolk, and such few of his omrahs as chanced to be in the kallah when the tumult began, all of whom were in equal consternation with their sovereign. In silent affliction and embarrassment, they stood around him, unable to speak a word of comfort, and no one daring to suggest an appeal to the stern and gloomy conqueror, who was the author of the bloody tragedy.

For six fearful hours did they listen to the raging of the storm ; while volley after volley, mingled with cries and groans that rent the very firmament, and fire after fire blazing upwards, ascended to heaven as witness of the horrors which children of clay were inflicting on their brother mortals. The wretched monarch could then endure it no longer. "The face of the Most High is turned from us in wrath," said he: "let us prostrate ourselves before him, and pray that he may change the heart of this man of blood. Let us also humble ourselves to this earthly conqueror : for the sake of our people will we do this. If he seeks our life, lo ! we are in his hand : it is better we should die at once, than live to mourn the extermination of our subjects, the ruin of our capital, and the loss of our honour."

In a mourning robe, girt hastily about his person, with dust upon his head, and a countenance disfigured with grief, did the emperor of Hindostan, attended only by Nizam-ul-Moolk, and a few menials, repair on foot to the apartments of the king of Persia ; who, after some delay, received him with cold formality. “ If I have sinned,” said the humbled monarch, while bitter tears ran down his cheeks, “ be my life the sacrifice ;—but spare the innocent.—Let the blood that has been shed be sufficient.—Spare this noble city ! Spare—spare my people !”—“ The emperor of India must not ask in vain,” replied Nadir with grave dignity ; and he forthwith gave his attendants the signal ; which, like the spell of a magician, at once silenced the uproar and stopped the slaughter. Mounted messengers spurred on the instant to every quarter of the city ; the drum was heard in the streets : the sword was sheathed ; the soldiers quitting their prey, immediately repaired to their respective stations ; and the deafening roar of destruction gave place to the stillness of despair.

And silence did indeed brood over the vast city ; but it was the silence of death—the stillness of the grave, broken only by the stifled sob of anguish, or the deep groan of unutterable woe. Who shall dare to paint the misery of that night, when the remnant of a scattered people stole from their

lurking places in dread and fear, to number and bewail their losses ; when the melancholy fragments of slaughtered families met together to weep over their bloody homes, or the sole survivor of a noble house sat motionless and tearless, like a blasted tree, among the ruins of his once happy dwelling ?

The duty of that night's watch, if not so revolting, was scarcely less painful than that of the day which preceded it. The only living things we saw were the ghost-like forms of those whom love, stronger yet than death, sent hovering round the ruins of some desolated abode in search of the missing objects of their affection ; or the plunderers and robbers of the dead : for there are miscreants who choose the hour of calamity as the fittest for their deeds of darkness. The moon, in her first quarter, threw a dim mysterious light upon the moveless limbs and ghastly countenances of the dead, and only for the fires which still threw up an occasional glare, and the faint groans of wounded wretches, or the yell of the wolf and jackall, which had already begun their prowling feast, and fled at our approach, and which broke upon the mournful silence, we might have fancied ourselves in a city stricken by the Almighty in his wrath,—a scathed and blasted land.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEARCH.

IT was late on the morning after these events before my duty permitted me to visit my friend Allee Verdee Beg, and to inquire into the condition of the wounded youth. It was, I found, sufficiently deplorable. It appeared that upon recovering his senses, which occurred even before his conductors reached their destination, he had struggled furiously with them, uttering many exclamations in a language which they did not understand. On seeing Allee Verdee, to whom he proved to be known, he had loudly insisted on being released ; and when that was not complied with, he reviled him in the bitterest terms ; swore that he would not consent to live ; attempted to tear open his wounds, and refused to permit any dressing or means of cure to be applied. It was by main force that he was at length secured and some healing application put to his hurts ; during which

time he had never ceased to struggle nor to talk in a language and call upon names which were not understood by his attendants ; and which doubtless related to his own friends and family. At length however he had fallen into a stupor, occasioned partly by exhaustion and partly by the sedative medicines applied externally ; for nothing would he admit internally. During the night he had raved a good deal, uttering much incoherent language ; but in this species of delirium he had taken several drafts of cooling and medicated beverage, which had soothed his extreme irritability, and he now lay pale and exhausted, but quiet, and heedless of every thing around him.

" I know the young man," said Allee Verdee Beg, in reply to some questions : " he is a raje-poot, of good family, attached to Jey Sing, rajah of Jeypore and Ambere : his father and many of his family were lately in Dehlee, and possibly have perished in the large coatee which you saw consumed yesterday, and which was an extensive brahminical establishment, containing a temple to their god Mahadeo. Perhaps, however, the father may have escaped, and I have some reason to believe the son's attraction to that place was of another description. We shall seek the old thakoor,*

* Lord, or chief; so the raje-poots call their chiefs and land-holders.

and if he or any of the family can be found, it will go further to compose the young man's mind than all the hakeems and all the drugs in Dehlee. I can leave him confidently under the charge of my old bearer Ram Das ; but I do not know how far it may be safe to venture abroad as yet."— "Quite safe, my friend, I will answer for it," interrupted I : "but you shall have good protection. I will accompany you myself; for I am much interested in this young rajepoot's fate, and will do all in my power to restore him to his friends."—"Ah ! I wish that may be all that's wanted," replied Allee Verdee : "but if it is your pleasure to go, let us set off at once."

We left the house accordingly ; not in the luxurious fashion of India, reclining in our palankeens and numerously attended, but girding on our arms, each with a single attendant and upon foot ; and thus we took our way to the dwelling of the young man's father, which was in the Ambah muhuleh, not very distant from the ruined temple of Mahadeo.

On reaching the house, which being small and obscurely placed, seemed to have escaped the common fate of those in its vicinity, we found it shut up, silent, and to all appearance deserted ; nor was it until my companion had called out repeatedly, and that the Hindoo hircarrah who accompanied him had spoken through the door for

some time in his own language, that a little wicket opened, and an old man, with alarm painted in his countenance, ventured, thus cautiously ensconced, to demand our business.

Upon our inquiring for his master, the aged domestic assured us that he was not within ; that he was gone he knew not where : by the oath of Gungejee—of Ram himself! the thakoor was not at home : nor was it till after much breath expended in soothing and much explanatory dialogue, that he confessed his master had left the house early that morning, in search of his son. “ It is well,” replied Allee Verdee; “ then we shall find him assuredly at the munder of Mahadeo.” And picking our way along the streets, among the sweltering carcasses, away we went to the ruined pagoda.

It was perfectly still and deserted : the blackened walls stood ragged and shattered, much as I had left them ; and a filmy smoke still ascended from the grey smouldering ashes, among which red glowing embers were still to be seen. This we observed through the entrance, which, though still encumbered with rubbish, was less completely blocked up than on the previous day, in consequence of the sinking of the burning matter.

“ No one can have entered by this way,” observed I, with a glance at the smothering vapour

which issued from the door-way.—“No, not by this way certainly,” replied Allee Verdee; “and yet this as certainly is the place to which old Doorjun Sing must have gone in quest of his son: there must be other means of access. Theeka,” continued he, and addressed some words which I did not understand to his Hindoo attendant, who replied in the same language, “I knew it; it must be so; and this fool has scruples about discovering to us the secret entrances of a ruin like this! Speak, you silly owl! don’t you see that your folly may destroy your countryman? Speak out; I answer for the khan’s discretion. The silly unbeliever fears to bring pollution on the temple of his god; as if that still remained to do, after the work of yesterday!”

At length the man’s scruples were removed, and he agreed to show us the way: it proved to be a very difficult one:—perhaps our guide made it the more so, to throw dust in our eyes and render future discovery less easy. We continued along the lane for some distance; threaded several winding passages among mean brick houses; dived under one or two dark archways; and at length stopped before the door of a mud-built hut, the roof of which, formed after the Indian fashion of straw and bamboo, had caught fire, and been chiefly consumed. The hircarrah started back in alarm. “They have been here too!” said he; but his

master, pushing through the ruins, led the way into a small court which exhibited less symptoms of violence. "Which way next?" said he impatiently to the hircarrah.—"Here, sir, through this opening; then round the corner; and the narrow passage beyond will lead straight to the high wall at the back of the munder, where there is a door."—"Ram ram jee!" exclaimed the Hindoo, as the pointed roof and trident-topped cullis of one of the temples came in sight, blackened by smoke still more than by weather: but the wall of the premises had not escaped so well; the door and door-posts had been consumed by fire; and the bough of a large peepul-tree which had overshadowed the temple, having shared in the same fate, had fallen, and thrown down a part of the inclosure: so that entrance was easy. But here the scruples of the Hindoo again prevailed:—"None but men of my nation enter here," said he. "I pray you, my lord, let me go forward and make the search; my caste will otherwise be forfeited."—"Again, fool!" said his master, frowning:—"what a work about a deserted ruin!—but be content; we shall not enter your temple:—every other place shall be searched, and strictly;" and without listening to further remonstrance, in he went, followed by myself and my attendant.

After scrambling over the ruins which obstructed the entrance, we found ourselves in a court al-

most filled with the rubbish that had fallen from the walls and the burning buildings around. In one corner of this stood a dark-looking square building, roofed in the peculiar style of Indian architecture; its top terminating in the pointed fashion we had seen from without, as if a second pagoda of smaller size had been placed upon the first: this was one of the temples to Mahadeo; around which were placed some figures of bulls cut in stone, rudely painted with red, black, and yellow; and several small stone pillars, set on end, called by the natives "lingahs;" all emblems of the god, and objects of these blind unbelievers' worship. Still nearer the centre stood the fragments of a yet larger pagoda, crushed as it appeared by the fall of some neighbouring building, when already shaken by the burning of its timber-work.

"It is gone, sir!—it has fallen!" exclaimed the Hindoo, with every mark of consternation in his countenance:—"Mahadeo is angry!—the place is quite deserted:—let us also depart."—"The poor heathen!" said Allee Verdee in a tone of pity:—"no, no, Theeka!—do you search that ruin—we shall examine the rest of the place:—I am determined not to quit it till fully satisfied that no one is here." At that moment a slight movement was perceptible among the fragments at the foot of the larger temple; and the eyes of a human

head became visible as they peered cautiously around. "Yah Narrain!" exclaimed Theeka, whose sharp eye had caught the first glimpse of this phenomenon, "there is one of them!"— "Soono-jee!*"—we are friends—come forward!" said Allee Verdee, while the hircarrah ran on chattering like a monkey in his unintelligible Hinduee tongue; till at length the owner of the aforesaid eyes, convinced not only that he was discovered, but that he was safe from danger, reared his body slowly above the rubbish, discovering the yellow skin, black top-knot of hair, and distinguishing thread of a brahmin.

"What want ye with me?" uttered he in an unsteady voice. "We seek the thakoor Doorjun Sing, who, as we have learned at his own house, is searching for his son: we have news of the young man to give him: if you know where he is, call him that he may hear them." The brahmin stood irresolute, as it appeared: "And why should Doorjun Sing thakoor search for his son among these burning ruins? Those who once lived here are dead; and he was not of them. Is it among these white ashes that he need seek the limbs of a living son?"—"Listen, friend!" replied Allee Verdee, "we know that the thakoor came here; and we believe you to know where he is:—ye need not hesitate; we mean nothing but good to him

* Hear me, friend.

and to you ;—but beware of deceiving us :—ye may know me ;—I am Allee Verdee Beg Nazir; and that none of your race or of his have cause to fear me.” The hesitation of the brahmin was fast yielding, as it seemed, when his eye fell upon my person, which I had purposely concealed behind that of my friend; and with a cry of alarm he was rushing back to his concealment, when Allee Verdee, in a raised voice, cried out, “ In the name of God, man, we are friends !—this is the officer who saved the life of young Arjun Sing, and who wishes to restore him to his father.” A great noise was now heard among the ruins ; and after a moment’s pause, we saw rising from them in haste the figure of a tall and portly man, whose grizzled beard and somewhat unwieldy figure declared him past the prime of life ; and whose peculiar mark of caste, and slight cotton dress, proclaimed him a rajepoot chief. It was Doorjun Sing himself, who being in concealment with the brahmin, had caught the last words of Allee Verdee ; and rushing towards us, exclaimed, “ Who talks of my son ?—who speaks of Arjun Sing ?—where is he, in the name of God ?—I am his father: let me see him once more.”—“ It is the thakoor,” said my friend. “ You are welcome, jee: your son is safe, and will soon be well, we hope; and here is the worthy chief to whom his life is due.” The quivering lips and fervent tone of the rajepoot were more elo-

quent than the few expressions of thanks which he addressed to me, mingled with inquiries regarding his condition: but his eager haste to be taken to see the young man was checked by the voice of the brahmin. "Remember, thakoor-jee, that you have other duties to perform—duties which I alone am unable for: remember that there are others connected with this holy place, to whom you are little less bound in duty and in love than to your own son:—that son is restored to you. Give Mahadeo the glory and the thanks; and leave not his minister helpless and unsupported in the hour of his need." The thakoor stopped short: reluctance was evident in his averted eye: he pointed to the brahmin while he spoke to us:—"This friend says the truth: I cannot yet accompany you:—we have a mournful search to make:—there have been many victims here; and their fate must be ascertained before I quit this place."—"A vain one it will be I fear," said I:—"my own eyes witnessed the fate of many; still I am ready to assist rather than interfere with your work."—"And I too will lend my aid," said Allee Verdee; "for the duty will be laborious, and require us all."

Our assistance was accepted with gratitude; and we followed the brahmin, who knew the intricacies of the building, upon this difficult and doubtful quest. Clambering over the still smok-

ing ruins, which choked up every avenue, we reached at last a shattered staircase, leading to a piece of wall higher than the rest, from whence we looked down upon the principal court of the establishment. The sight was disgusting and horrible ; for the terrace upon which the pile of wood and bodies had been erected having given way before the fire had completed its office, the whole had been precipitated forwards into the area ; and many of the bodies still lay there, half consumed, scorched, and hideously shrivelled among masses of ashes, half-burned wood, and heaps of brick and mortar, fallen from the surrounding houses.

" No living thing can be there," said Allee Verdee, shuddering ; and the thakoor casting a hurried glance at the still glowing embers, shook his head, and turned mournfully away. Still persevering in our object, we had left the place where the fire had been fiercest, and were examining a shed, which being formed of brick and tiles, had offered a less destructible material to its ravages, when something like a faint cry caught our attention. Every one instinctively stood still, in hopes of hearing it repeated : nor were we disappointed ; in half a minute's space another wailing and desponding sound was heard distinctly by us all : but none of us could tell from whence it came. " It is from some poor wretch buried under that

fearful mass of rubbish," said Allee Verdee ; " and all our help must be in vain, I fear."—"Hush ! let us hear it once more," said I : " I thought it came from under ground." But a long interval elapsed without any répetition of the ominous sound. " It was a dying groan, I fear," said I.—" No, hark ! there it is again."—" The well ! the well !" exclaimed the brahmin, " how could we forget it ? There it is : on the left, beneath that great tamarind-tree :" and towards the tamarind-tree we made our way, with all the speed the dangerous footing would permit.

The tamarind, scorched and blighted by the flame, still stretched its strong and stubborn boughs over the well, which had supplied the inhabitants with water, and some burning beams having fallen against these branches, they had preserved a little space around its mouth comparatively clear of the wreck. To this space we came at length ; and ere we had quite reached the mouth a fearful confirmation was given of the truth of the brahmin's suspicion ; for the same voice was heard in the low tones of exhaustion, alternately calling for help, and uttering exclamations of despair. " I was sure of it," said he : " it is the women ! some of them have cast themselves into the well to escape from the ravishers. Mighty Ram ! that they should still be alive!"—" Ropes ! ropes !" said Allee Verdee. " Theeka, fly and bring them : we

may still save some of them." Off darted Theeka, while the thakoor and the brahmin shouted down to the sufferers, calling them to "be of good comfort, for friends and help was at hand."—"Alas!" answered the same voice, "all are dead but me, I fear; and I cannot live long in this condition.—Oh! quick! quick! take me out, or kill me at once!"

Tedious was the time until the hircarrah's return. Heart-struck at the poor wretches' cries, in our impatience, we had taken our turbans and girdles, and tied them together; but the well was far too deep for such inefficient means: we were forced to await the return of our messenger. At last he appeared; and the requisite arrangements being made, we prepared to lower the rope. Will it be credited, that even at this most critical moment a delay occurred, from the absurd scruples entertained by these unbelieving idolaters, which might have defeated our purpose, and been fatal to the suffering wretches? It was necessary that some one should descend with the rope, to fasten it round such as might be disabled from assisting themselves. But no one was willing to expose himself to the pollution of touching the dead bodies, which the voice had declared to be there. "God is great!" exclaimed I, in horror and amazement: "is it possible that any one can hesitate for such a reason?—The people will die

while you are settling this foolish point :—here am I, ready to descend : a little water, and a prayer or two, will quickly purify me. I will descend with the rope.” And regardless of the remonstrances and apologies which were now made by the tha-koor and Allee Verdee, and especially by my attendant, a stout Affshar, who cared little for any body, dead or alive, anxious also to see the matter properly attended to, I fitted the rope in a loop around my person, and had myself lowered away by the windlass, which is generally attached to such wells.

For some moments the darkness into which I was plunged did not permit me to distinguish any thing.. As soon as I touched bottom I found myself standing in the water, upon, and in contact with, certain irregular surfaces, which I had no difficulty in recognising for human bodies ; and the groans which issued from the mass served to convince me that more than one, at all events, were still alive. Of the vivaciousness of one I had immediate and abundant proof; for scarcely had I time to look about me when she clung to me with a convulsive grasp, which startled me so much at the moment, that I endeavoured to release myself, and to ascertain by questioning her, the condition of herself and those around her; but her only replies were, blessings for my assistance, and frantic entreaties

to be taken from thence. The best and speediest course I could adopt was, to have the petitioner, whom I easily recognised to be a female, conveyed as quickly as possible above ground ; so I gave the preconcerted signal, and soon landed my charge upon the ground beside the well.—“ Seeta ! the wife of Manickjee, is it thou ?” exclaimed the brahmin :—“ in a lucky hour hast thou been saved : but who have suffered with thee ?—are there any others alive ?” It was some moments before the bewildered creature could reply ; when she did, it was with a shudder of horror :—“ O yes, there are many ; but they are all dead now :—they must be dead ;—not one has spoken for hours.—There is Counlah, the daughter of old Bullaram the goldsmith, and her cousin, Nounee ; and there is poor Soorayah—I heard her groan just now.”—“ Soorayah ?—what !—the brahmin Gopaul Dos’ daughter ?” demanded the thakoor, with consternation in his voice.—“ Yes : the same.”—“ Almighty God ! my poor son ! how will he bear this ?—But she groaned just now, you say ?—Oh, Mahadeo, help us !—Perhaps—I will go myself :”—but before he could conclude the sentence I had adjusted the rope once more, and called impatiently on the others to lower me away again. The truth, like a flash of lightning, had burst upon my mind :—“ it is his love !—his betrothed, perhaps,” thought I, as I

rapidly descended :—“this was his attraction to the temple.—Poor young man !—God grant—.”—My feet once more reached the revolting pavement of the well.—“ Soorayah ! which is Soorayah ?” cried I, groping around me. My question was answered by a groan from a dark object, which was just visible above the water :—it was the body of a female immersed above the waist, propping herself with one arm, which rested upon the cors^e of one of the sufferers. In a moment she was in my arms, and the signal was given: in very few more my almost senseless burden was deposited in safety: that burden was a lovely female: her wet drapery clung to her young and slender person, and a profusion of jet-black hair, all drenched with water, hung dishevelled around her exquisite features, and over a bosom, only to be rivalled by those of the houris in Paradise.—“ It is—it is her !—it is Soorayah herself !” cried the thakoor: “ but she is dead.—Oh, mighty Seeva ! restore her to us, and let me be the sacrifice.”—“ Be patient, thakoor !” said the brahmin, who was more collected :—“ the maid is not dead ;—see ! she breathes—she moves :—set her down here in the sun; the damp of that cold well has chilled her limbs :—if we had but clothes.” I had already torn the shawl from my waist to wrap about her: the other men of the party, with the true feeling of Mussulman delicacy to a female,

had retired some paces distant: turning away my eyes, I now flung my shawl around her person.—“The bountiful Creator will reward you, khan,” said the thakoor, seizing the hem of my kabba, and kissing it.

The brahmin now, taking a small box from his girdle, and producing flint and steel, struck a light, and placing some drug of powerful perfume upon the burning match, held it under the nose of the young maiden. In a few seconds she sneezed violently, opened her eyes, and looked around her: but her gaze was wild and unmeaning. “Good,” said the ‘brahmin, “it will do:—she revives.”—“But is she not hurt?” said the anxious tha-koor; “nothing but feathers could fall unharmed into yon fearful well.”—“She is bruised, as you may see, sir,” said the brahmin: “but none of her limbs appear much injured. If we only had her in a place of safety, and with women around her!—there is an old doolee* in the other court, if we had men to carry it.”—“At my house there are plenty of bearers,” said Allee Verdee. “Theeka, run and bring hither a set, and the maiden can be taken care of there.”—“Pardon me, Nazir,” said the thakoor, “the house of a rajepoot is fittest for a rajepootnee, even were she not the beloved of my son.—Oh, if it please the Great God that they both live!—and his act may

* A sort of palankeen.

clearly be traced in this event—nothing now remains to keep them asunder. Ah! my friend Purtaub, why couldst thou not have lived to see this day?—But destiny is imperious."

The hircarrah having gone for the bearers, it occurred to us, that in our joy for the recovery of Soorayah, we had shamefully neglected to inquire into the condition of the other sufferers in the well; and my Affshar servant now took my place to assist in bringing up any others that might be in a condition to profit by his aid: but the attempt was bootless; no sound was to be heard, no motion to be felt;—the sufferers were at rest. The only body he could reach, and which he brought with him to the surface, was that of a female, young and beautiful, indeed, but pale, mangled, and quite lifeless: it was too certain that whatever others might be in that darksome grave must be in the same condition. A pang shot through my heart at the thought of so much loneliness and beauty consigned to so horrible a fate; and yet what was this one confined instance, which by thus being forced upon our observation occasioned so painful an emotion, to the dark catalogue of human woe inflicted by the bloody deeds of yesterday?

We lifted the scarcely revived Soorayah across the fragments of the inclosures, and laying her carefully upon the curtained litter, escorted her

in safety to the thakoor's house. As for the other woman, Seeta, strange to say, she was even less hurt than Soorayah; and was readily received into the first neighbouring dwelling that was in a condition to afford her temporary shelter.

The thakoor was now impatient to embrace his wounded and broken-hearted son; and his bowels yearned to extract the barbed arrow from his heart, and communicate the joyful tidings of his Soorayah's safety. The only difficulty was, to do this so cautiously as not to risk the effects of a too powerful emotion on his weakened frame.

The young Arjun had awoke from sleep during our absence; and though from bodily weakness and the constraint under which he was kept by his attendants, he was incapable of such violent efforts as he had made at first, he still evinced a settled despondency of mind, and declared his resolution not to survive the loss of his friends.

He was in this gloomy state when we entered the house. "Lift up your head, my friend, and be of good cheer," said Allee Verdee, going up to the couch on which he lay: "there is good news: I have brought you a dear friend, who has escaped the bloody business of yesterday: he seeks permission to visit you." A momentary flash lighted up the young man's eye as the other spoke; but it quickly gave way to the dull, contracted glare of

despondency. "Friend!" muttered he in a gloomy tone; "no, no, I have no friends; they are all gone—all. Did I not see it?"—"Oh, say not so, my son," exclaimed the thakoor, rushing forward, in a voice that trembled with emotion; "do not speak thus;—it is your father, your dear father, who loves you more than his own life. Is he not a friend? will you not live for him?"—"My father!" repeated the young man, softening as the thakoor stooped to clasp him in his arms; "my father!—ay, my dear father!—but where are the rest? Where is the good old Gopaul Dos? where is the kind thakoor of Seekreegurh? and, oh! where is she who was the light of my eyes,—the core of my heart?—Oh! that dreadful sight!" said he, shuddering, after a pause:—"no, no, I will not, I cannot survive her."—"You shall live, my son!—you shall live for her, and with her. She is safe, my dear son!—she is safe, believe me; and behold the brave, the worthy benefactor to whom all this happiness is owing!"

The life's blood, which seemed almost to have deserted the frame of the young rajepoot, rushed like a torrent to his pale countenance; his eye sparkled with sudden energy as he drank in the sense of his father's words; and but for the bands which confined him, he would have started from the couch. "Soorayah alive!" exclaimed he, in thrilling tones; "O God! can it be possible?—ye

dare not trifle with my misery."—But why attempt to dwell on such a scene? It is enough to say that the life which had just before seemed worthless in the eyes of young Arjun, became as suddenly of infinite value; and that from the very hour of his father's first visit he recovered so fast, that in less than a week he was able to be transported in a litter to the thakoor's house, where he soon discovered, from the most incontrovertible evidence, that his Soorayah not only lived, but loved him as fondly as ever.

CHAPTER XV.

THE YOUNG RAJEPOOT'S STORY.

IT will easily be believed that I felt no small curiosity to learn something further of the history of persons in whose fate I had so strangely and unexpectedly become interested ; and as soon as the young Arjun was sufficiently recovered to converse without difficulty, he made no scruple in gratifying me with the following account of his family and adventures :—

“ I am a native of the rajepoot state of Jeypore. My father, Doorjun Sing, thakoor of a village not far from Alwur, is a Seesoodeah of high family, but small fortune ; and as proud of his pedigree, good man, as the rana of Chitore himself. I am his eldest living son ; for those who came before me all died in their infancy, and he had almost despaired of seeing his race continued in this life, when I made my appearance. You may imagine therefore that I became an object of great solicitude.

The holiest brahmins were summoned to cast my horoscope, and pronounce upon the character of my future destiny ; and alms far beyond my father's means were distributed to the fakkeers, who flocked to his village in troops, like kites and vultures to a carcass, so soon as the news of this fortunate event were noised abroad.

" I have heard it said that the horoscope thus obtained was of a very dubious character ; and puzzled the learned pundits who attempted to interpret it so much, that after all their pains, their solution was too profoundly oracular to be intelligible to common sense. Imminent perils were balanced by lucky coincidences, and malignant stars insisted upon mingling their influences with the most auspicious conjunctions of the heavenly bodies :—a predication which, I take it, will adapt itself to the fortunes of most human beings. It has done so most aptly to mine. May the happier influences prevail in future, as hitherto the malignant ones have had the ascendant !

" Notwithstanding the fondness of my parents, I was educated with perfect attention to the hardihood of a rajepoot warrior, and trained to all the athletic and military exercises of our nation ; and before I had numbered fifteen years there were few of my contemporaries who could outdo me in wielding the various gymnastic instruments ; the heaviest clubs and weights, or the strongest bows and

chains ; or who could excel me in feats of agility, either on foot or on horseback. The toughest scaled fish or the best twisted turban could never resist the stroke of my tulwar : my arrows struck truer to their mark, and deeper in the earthen mound than those of any youth of my years ; and my Nugeena matchlock has frequently sent its ball through the hare or the fox, which I was pursuing at the full speed of my horse. In the use of the sword I considered myself particularly successful, having had the advantage of practising under a famousputta-baz, or sword-player, who performed such feats with his long tegha,* as might seem almost incredible : and had the faithless blade which snapped in my grasp, but stood me as it used to do, upon the day when you, sir, rescued me, it is possible that you might have lost more soldiers, and I, in the end, my life.

" Of all amusements, however, hunting and hawking were those in which I most delighted ; and from the royal tiger down to the antelope, there was not an animal of the jungle or the plain which had not in turn been the object my pursuit. The extensive plains which lie to the southwest of this city abound in game of all sorts ; but I had been particularly successful in the northern parts of my native state, bordering upon Narnoul and Rewarrie ; and thither, consequently, I fre-

* A particular sort of sword : tegha is also a blade, generally.

quently repaired to pursue my sport, residing with a relative of my father's, who was thakoor of a village near the borders.

" It happened one day, that, having followed a herd of deer into a thick dhak jungle, I became separated from my companions and servants, and was wandering about, uncertain in which direction to urge my horse, when, issuing unexpectedly from the jungle, I found myself at once entering a plain of considerable extent, bounded all around, but at various distances, by wood. In one quarter, where the spires of one or two munduls, or pagodas, appeared rising above a grove of trees, I concluded that there must be a village ; and in hopes of obtaining the refreshment of a little sour milk and water, and a guide to direct me on my way, I pushed my horse towards it.

" On reaching the grove, which was formed of old mango trees with some magnificent tamarind and bhur * trees, I found that, instead of a village, the latter served only to shade a temple of considerable sanctity, dedicated to Mahadeo ; which rose encircled by a number of smaller ones, around a large tank which occupied the centre of the grove.

The sound of singing, as I approached, informed me that the place had inhabitants at all

* A species of the peepul, or Indian fig-tree.

events ; and soon I could distinguish the quick, shrill, but sweet voices of many young females, who, secure as they deemed themselves in the sacredness of the place, gave full loose to their innocent gaiety. You, my lord, are a young man, and doubtless know, and can sympathise with the thrill of mingled pleasure and curiosity which such sounds are calculated to convey to the hearts of youths like us. Seized with an irresistible desire of seeing these playful maidens, I approached with caution, not intending to disturb their mirth, nor to discover myself at all, unless tempted by some favourable circumstance ; and I advanced so far as to obtain a full view of eight or ten young women, beautifully formed, and gaily apparelled ; who, having performed their ablutions in the tank, were proceeding in due order, with their hands full of lotus flowers, and their hair dressed with blossoms of jasmine and the chumpa, to finish their service at the shrine of the Great God.

" One, the leader of the group, conspicuous for the elegance of her form and the lightness of her step, particularly attracted my notice. An amber-coloured doputtah, floating round her polished shoulders, and half-concealing her young budding bosom, fell in graceful folds, almost to her feet, and, with a drapery of deep lilac bordered with red, which was wrapped around her waist,

set off the rich hue of her silken skin. Her black glossy hair, parted on the fair forehead, was wreathed with flowers, and, slightly twisted into a knot, fell partly over her shoulders and neck. Her round arms and slender ancles were adorned with shining bangles and rich jewels of gold, while her small taper fingers blushed with the orange dye of the hinnah :—but her face ! how can description do it justice ? The serene beauty of the full moon affords but an imperfect image of its placid loveliness ; the eyes of the antelope are dim compared with the dark lustre of the speaking orbs which illumined her countenance ; coral became pale beside the vermillion of her lips ; and Bahrein itself cannot show such pearls as her teeth. I describe this lovely vision more as after-acquaintance gave me opportunity of seeing her, than as the momentary glimpse obtained at the time could then enable me to discover ;—yet that glimpse was sufficient to set my heart on fire.

“ It was indeed but a glance ; for scarcely had I recovered myself from the rapture into which the sight of so much beauty had thrown me when the sudden trampling of horses attracted both their attention and mine ; and what was my indignant astonishment to see a young man, richly dressed in the Mussulman garb, followed by five or six mounted and armed servants, dash through

the trees, and galloping up to the group of startled females, throw themselves from their horses, and seize upon the very maiden on whom I had been so eagerly gazing.

"The shrieks which arose from the maidens, who scattered in an instant in every direction, like a flock of pigeons when a hawk has stooped at them, roused me from my momentary pause of astonishment. To draw my sword, my good Serooee blade, and spur towards the men who held the struggling girl, was the impulse and the act of a moment. I never thought of consequences; my mind was only alive to the disgraceful outrage of violently assaulting a lovely Hindoo girl, at the very altar of her worship; and my blows fell thick and effectually upon the ruffians who had committed it. Before they were well aware of my attack, two of them were stretched upon the ground; and while they still stared irresolute and astonished around them, my sword descended upon the neck of a third, and his head flew several paces from his body:—' Ram Ram jee!' exclaimed I, and prepared to follow up my success; but by this time the swords of the others were drawn; and while two of them persevered in their attempt to lead off the girl, their master and another interposing between them and me, attacked me vigorously.

"Happy was it then for me that I was a skilful swordsman, for both master and man knew well how to use their weapons ; and while I was endeavouring to pass them, so as to overtake those who were struggling with the young woman, I received a severe cut upon the right thigh. But the arm which dealt the stroke never gave another ; for, before he could recover his balance, a back sweep of my blade shore the limb in two above the elbow, while the violence of the shock threw its owner from his horse.

"Dismayed at the fate of his master, the servant quitted me ; but in flying, he drew a pistol and fired it full at me. The ball wounded my left shoulder ; but, scarcely sensible of the injury, I still made way towards those who were retreating with their prey. They, however, observing the fate of their companions and the fall of their master, gave up the adventure, exclaiming—‘It’s the devil, or Ramchunder !’ They quitted the girl, and ran towards their fallen lord. I did not pursue them, but followed the terrified maiden towards the temple, resolved to defend her in case of any renewed attack. But the baffled ruffians did not seem disposed to renew the fray : hastily binding up their master’s wound, and placing him upon his horse, two of them led him away, while the other examined the bodies of his fallen com-

rades. One of these appearing still to breathe, he lifted him on a horse and bore him off; the other two remained stark dead where they fell.

"Having watched the aggressors until they had disappeared, I turned to look for the fair cause of the fray. She leant, still panting and sobbing, against the stone platform which supported the emblem of the god she served, and to whom she had fled for protection. Her face, now partly veiled by the yellow scarf which she had drawn over her head, rested on both hands; her form was exquisitely lovely; and a feeling of mingled tenderness and veneration, altogether new and delightful, overwhelmed me as I gazed, so that for some moments I was unable to utter a word.

"'Beautiful maiden!' said I at length, 'dismiss your fears; your enemy has fled, and there now only remains before you a devoted slave. Command him;—say, what can he do for you? whither can he conduct you? for this spot may be dangerous.' While I yet spoke a portly person, somewhat stricken in years, across whose tawny breast hung the sacred brahminical cord, but who wore no other vestment than an ample dhotee of thin grey silk, came bustling up to the entrance of the temple. 'Eyah! Mahadeo! what business is this? Where is my daughter? Oh, villain! even in the very temple itself hast thou dared?—But what do I see?' continued he,

casting his eyes over my dress and the teeka* on my forehead, ‘ a rajepoot, and a thakeor too, and yet a robber !—a base ravisher !—Tremblest thou not at the sacrilege ?’—‘ Oh ! father,’ said the soft voice of the beautiful maiden, ‘ speak not so harshly ;—that is not the villain : he has preserved me : but for his help, oh ! what might have happened !’ The old brahmin stopped and gazed at me with an altered eye. ‘ It is true, father,’ said I ; ‘ the mighty God himself doubtless sent me to aid your daughter at a very critical moment. Behold these bodies ! this is the weapon which struck the blows; but they were dealt upon the villains who would have carried off your daughter.—Lo ! I yield it to you.’—‘ It is true—it is all true, father ! They had seized me : I was powerless, and they would have carried me away, when this stranger appeared, struck down the ruffians, and saved me, dearest father !’ and she threw herself into the old man’s arms.

“ ‘ I thank thee, O mighty Seevah ! that thou hast remembered thy servant,’ said the old brahmin, embracing his daughter, and casting his eyes upwards. ‘ Stranger, forgive my rudeness, and receive my thanks. Oh ! thou hast preserved to Gopaul Dos what he values far above his life ! But how ? thou bleedest—thou art wounded.—

* The wafer or mark of clay or other colour worn on the fore-heads of Hindoos.

Soorayah, my daughter, run, see for help ;—the young man faints !' and, in fact, insensible to the loss of blood which had flowed freely from my gashed thigh, while the interest of the scene arrested all my attention, no sooner had my notice been attracted to the accident than I felt myself grow sick, and was forced to lean against the door-way, lest I should fall upon the pavement.

" By this time one or two of the frightened girls had returned ; and gathering some leaves, the brahmin chewing them, applied them to my wounds, which he bound up with a shred from his daughter's scarf, while she assisted him with an expression of gratitude and interest, which riveted the chains her beauty had already bound around me.

" Some younger brahmins now came from a garden not far distant ; and finding me unable to walk, they brought a small bullock rhut* belonging to the old man, in order to transport me to his village, about two miles off ; and although rather ashamed at using so effeminate a description of conveyance, I was not only forced to confess my inability to proceed otherwise, but glad on any terms to gain access to a place where I might occasionally see the object of my affection.

No sooner had we reached the village than the

* Or covered cart, commonly used for conveying women and old persons.

old brahmin, Gopaul Dos, leading me carefully into his own house, which stood pleasantly situated in a grove of magnificent bhur trees, set himself to examine my wounds with still greater attention ; and assuring me that they were of no material consequence, and with care and rest would soon heal, he requested to know my name and place of abode.

" I remarked that Gopaul Dos appeared strongly affected upon hearing the name and residence of my father ; and that, as I took occasion to mention some particulars corroborative of my story, several half-suppressed exclamations expressive of surprise escaped him. At last he bid me cordial welcome. ' The name of your father,' said he, ' has revived certain recollections in my old brain, which have somewhat agitated me ; for it is many years since I have seen him, and then it was in circumstances of a trying nature ; but he was then, what he has ever continued, a brave, an honourable, and a worthy man ; and I doubt not that his son will follow in his footsteps, and become a faithful pillar of the state. We shall have the thakoor made acquainted with the circumstances which detain you here, for you shall not stir from hence until these hurts are healed ; and believe me you shall not find us ungrateful for the good office you have done us.'

" It appeared that when the hukalkholes* were sent to remove the dead bodies from the vicinity of the temple they were recognised as men from the Rewarree district ; and we soon after discovered the author of this unprincipled outrage was the son of a rich aumildar of that district, and who having seen Soorayah, while bathing with her companions in a sacred tank near Narnoul, had become violently enamoured of her person, and had since that time made use of every contrivance to obtain her for his harem. Outrages of this nature were unhappily not uncommon among the more unprincipled Mussulman youth ; who, addicted to every species of debauchery, felt no scruple whatever as to the means of gratifying their vicious passions.

" We heard also, that both the young man and his father, exasperated at the accident which had befallen his son, had sworn to exert their whole interest at court (and that was said to be considerable with the vizier) to obtain revenge upon all who were concerned in the affair which had occasioned it. And although the old brahmin affected to make light of the threat, it still was plain to me that he was by no means free from apprehension on the subject. ' At all events,' said he,

* "Eaters of Unclean Things;" a low caste, employed in India in the vilest offices alone.

‘ we live under the shadow of the great Jey Sing Sewaee, who is not the prince to permit his subjects to be trampled upon at the pleasure of every arrogant officer of the emperor’s ; and under the protection of his arm we may rest secure.’

“ Time passed on, however, and these threats remained unfulfilled, and were forgotten. During my convalescence, which was not, I must confess, promoted by any endeavour of mine, I was frequently blessed by the sight, and cheered by the attendance of the lovely Soorayah ; whose feminine tenderness and modest demeanour increased my fascination. But these glimpses of delight only served to inflame my love ; for although we Hindoos do not by any means profess that strict seclusion of women which is so rigorously practised in the harems of Mussulmans, the customs of our fathers, and a natural regard to female delicacy and our own honour forbids open or unlimited intimacy between the sexes. Thus, when attachments do subsist between young persons of different sexes, the hours of courtship are rather stolen from the rigid restraints of society, than avowedly permitted by the relatives of the lovers. Whatever expedients therefore were employed by me to declare my love to Soorayah, or to render myself acceptable to her, were necessarily practised in secret ; in secret only did I venture to offer her those tokens, which among

us are the signals of love ; and the opportunities I enjoyed for such declarations were rare ; for it seemed as if Soorayah herself had been divided by a lurking disposition to favour my suit and a terror for hearing it unequivocally declared.

" For my own part, secretly impressed as I was with a belief that I was not indifferent to her, I could no longer control the impatience I felt to know my fate, and penetrate the maidenly disguise which she threw over her feelings. I therefore resolved to watch an early opportunity, and press Soorayah so closely, as to leave no room for further doubt regarding her real sentiments. If these should prove favourable, I saw no reason for concealing my hopes from her father, and at once soliciting his daughter in marriage.

" My surprise and disappointment may therefore be easily conceived, when on meeting her one morning in the grove, as she returned from worship at the temple, and uttering my declaration in very impassioned terms, instead of the modest confusion and blushing acknowledgement which I had fondly anticipated, she heard me with trembling reluctance, and replied to my earnest entreaty for a confession of mutual attachment, if such did exist in her breast, by an exclamation of distress and showers of tears. ' Oh ! no, no, no ! ' sobbed she : —' do you not know—that it can never be ? Oh ! there is a fearful, insuperable bar :—think of it no

more; forget an unhappy wretch, who has only gratitude to give, and never, never can cease to be grateful to her deliverer.' With these words, and in a passion of tears, she broke from me, leaving me thunderstruck, as well as inexpressibly distressed, at a conduct for which I could in no way satisfactorily account.

"That I was by no means an object of indifference to her, seemed fairly to be inferred, not only from the numberless little traits of kindness and attention which had characterised her behaviour towards me, but also from the agitation with which she had received the direct avowal of my attachment, and the distress with which she had declared the impossibility of further intercourse. But what could be the cause of this agitation?—this distress?—this solemn deprecation of further addresses? 'It is time to end these doubts,' said I internally. —'I will seek an explanation where it must surely be given—from her father himself: he loves me, and esteems me; he has told me so; and why should he refuse me his daughter, unless indeed she were already betrothed?'—and the thought was like an ice-bolt through my heart. 'But, no!—it is impossible!' continued I; 'she would have told me that; I must have heard it ere now. At all events he will relieve this dreadful anxiety; and surely if it lies with him, he will make me happy.'

"While these thoughts were passing tumultuously through my brain, and I was endeavouring to arrange my future line of conduct, I encountered the brahmin himself. My resolution failed me as the opportunity I had just wished for presented itself; and such is the inconsistency of the human heart, that I would rather at the moment have encountered my enemy the aumildar, with all his followers again, than have thus suddenly entered upon the subject next my heart, with the only person who had the power of granting me a favourable reply.

"After a painful struggle, however, I did atlast address him ;—declared to him the state of my affections, and craved his consent to my happiness. The old brahmin listened to me with mildness; and though his countenance expressed concern, almost amounting to consternation, it was unmingled with displeasure. 'My son,' said he, after a pause of some moments, 'it is but lately that a suspicion of the fact which you have just declared has crossed my mind, and I have earnestly prayed that my fears might be groundless; for your confirmation of them this day overwhelms me with grief.'—'With grief, my father!' exclaimed I;—'may the mighty Seevah himself avert that I should cause you grief!—'Nay; listen to me, my son :—I say with grief: sorrow for my own blind inadvertence, which may be the

cause of much distress to those I love well. Alas ! we selfish mortals, absorbed in what interests ourselves, heed not the effect of our conduct upon others. The aged forget the feelings and the passions of youth, and sinfully expose them to their fatal effects. I grieve, my son, for thee : I grieve still more for the daughter of my affections, whose gentle heart can ill support the withering influence of sorrow and disappointment.'—'Nay, but, my father'—‘Oh, hush, my son !—bear with me ; hear me to the end ; you have dearly earned a right to my confidence. Listen to it patiently, and you will then comprehend the full cause of my sorrow, and of your own irremediable disappointment.’ My heart sickened with a foreboding of evil as I heard these words ; but I controlled my feelings, and listened in patient misery to the narrative which was to deprive me of hope.

“ ‘ To begin my tale,’ said the brahmin, ‘ with one of its most important facts ; I must inform you, that Soorayah is not *my* daughter.—You start ; but such is the fact ; and a narrative of the circumstances by which she became my adopted daughter involves some particulars connected with your own family, of which probably you are as yet ignorant. Be it known to you, therefore, that in the days of the struggles which took place after the death of Shah Allum, between the princes Azeem Ooshau and Jehan Shah, for the throne of Dehlee ;—strug-

gles which divided the wide empire of Hindostan, and set brother at variance with brother, father against son, and ranged the princes and nobles of the land in mortal opposition to each other;— Purtaub Sing, thakoor of Seekreegurh, and your noble father, were friends and companions in arms. Young and ardent, they readily obeyed the commands of our prince, Jey Sing, who espoused the cause of Jéhan Shah, and they were foremost in every battle and skirmish which took place.

“ It happened on a certain occasion, that the two friends, being detached from the main army, with fifty or sixty followers, to protect a convoy of provisions, were attacked upon their way to the rendezvous by a troop of the enemy’s cavalry, amounting to more than triple their number. Unable to make effectual resistance in the field, they retreated to a little half ruinous mud gurhee,* which chanced to be near; and swearing to support each other, and to die rather than yield, after the manner of rajepoots, they barricadoed the entrance, and prepared for an obstinate defence.

“ The struggle promised, indeed, to be of the sternest, for their opponents were Patans,† renowned for their valour and skill at the scimitar; and they were themselves too few in number to

* A small fort.

† A tribe of Affghauns, long settled in India.

garrison effectually the breach and imperfect walls of their petty fortress.

“ ‘The Patans came on with their numberless little flags fluttering above their matchlock and spear-points, and summoned the rajepoots to give up the place, and surrender themselves prisoners. It was afterwards known that they imagined that a part at least of the convoy was also within the gurhee. The rajepoots rejected this proposal with scorn ; but offered to evacuate the place, provided they were permitted to march off all unmolested, with arms and baggage. ‘ No,’ said the Patan commander, ‘ we cannot allow the fellows to carry off their arms ;—they must give them up, or we storm the place, and put the whole —’s to death.’—‘ Come on, then,’ replied your father and his friend : ‘ come and take them yourselves.’

“ ‘A wild shout was the answer of the Patans, as they ranged up to the entrance of the gurhee, near which they received the rajepoots’ reply in a shower of matchlock balls, that stretched half the foremost of the assailants upon the ground, and checked the impetuosity of their charge. Again they rallied, and approached the gateway, which yawned wide, from the ravages of the weather and of decay, and was undefended by a single opponent : but no sooner had the advancing division of the Patans made their appearance within the entrance than a murderous fire again poured

in upon them ; and before the smoke had cleared, or they could recover the shock which the column had received, the heavy trenchant *teghas** of the rajepoots were amongst them, cleaving and hewing down the astonished assailants, as the sapling is shorn by the axe of the woodman.

" " Once more they retreated, and appeared willing to abandon their pray. But then a cry arose ' Let the gateway alone :—try the walls all round : ' and so worn by the rains of so many seasons were the mud-built walls, that it was no difficult task to scale them in any part ; and the breaches were of themselves too numerous to be effectually defended by the small number of the rajepoots.

" " Of this fact the defenders themselves appeared to be sensible ; for they made no opposition to the entrance of their enemies. But when nearly one-third of their number had mounted the walls, and were springing and pouring into the place, the matchlocks were once again discharged with fatal effect ; then thrown away ; and the whole surviving rajepoots, their hair flowing loose from their heads, and their garments thickly sprinkled with the ominous yellow dye,† brandishing their

* Long swords.

† The rajepoots when upon any expedition in which they are resolved to conquer or die, loosen their hair and dye their clothes yellow ; and often intoxicate themselves with opium.

black shields and heavy swords, rushed like demons upon their assailants.

“ ‘ Brave as the Patans proverbially are, they were not prepared for so active and desperate a resistance from a mere handful of men ; they had yet to learn how rajepoots, self-devoted, but resolved to sell their lives at a dear rate, are wont to fight. The struggle now became fierce and deadly in the extreme. To bear without shrinking the cold sharp steel flashing fast in the very eye, and to hear the heavy blow that shreds the limbs, or sinks deep into the quivering flesh, is a test that tries the courage of the bravest soldier ; and here there was no giving back ; for four walls inclosed the combatants, and the small area of the gurhee soon became slippery with their blood ; whilst the yellow drapery of the rajepoots, as well as the quilted war-coats of the Patans, became deeply dyed with dark crimson.

“ ‘ It happened in the furious whirls and eddies of the strife that your father and Purtaub Sing, with two or three of their followers, were separated from the rest of their surviving friends, and hemmed into a corner of the gurhee by more than a score of the fiercest Patans, with their chief, Daood Khan, at their head. They bravely maintained their ground, however, keeping their enemies at bay, while a ghastly rampart of the dead and wounded rose between the combatants, as one af-

ter another fell under repeated blows, or sunk from sheer loss of blood from his gaping wounds, till at length the last rajepoot fell, leaving your father and his friend alone, exposed to the still furious attack of the Patan chief.

“ ‘At length the good sword with which Purtaub Sing had fought in many a fray, being struck by some weapon in the medley, flew in splinters from his hand, and left him defenceless, while a spear, glancing at the same moment from his shield, smote him on the right breast, and bore him to the ground. Your father, always a powerful man, and at that time in the flower of his strength, wielded one of those long-bladed swords of the south called a *d'hoop*: he instantly bestrode the body of his friend; and whirling his formidable weapon, the shine of which had long before been quenched in blood, drove back three or four Patans who had pressed forward upon the fall of Purtaub Sing. ‘On, my men, on!’ shouted Daood Khan: ‘this is their chief!—cleave him to the heart!’ and as he spoke his own sword descended heavily upon your father’s shield. It was the last blow he made; for before he could recover his guard or interpose his shield, the rapid sweep of your father’s heavy weapon fell with the true drawing sleight upon the neck of the Patan, cutting sheer through quilted coat, shirt mail, and bone, almost to the centre of his breast.

" " A cry of horror arose from the followers of Daood Khan at this tremendous blow, as the body of their leader fell heavily upon the heap of carnage beneath ; and your father gained a moment's breathing space. It was however but a moment, for the greater number of the rajepoots being by this time cut down, fresh assailants poured upon the thakoor, who, sinking with fatigue as well as from his many wounds, could not have maintained the contest much longer. At that critical point of time certain of the Patans who had kept the summit of the walls, gave the alarm to their comrades, that a cloud of dust had issued from a neighbouring tope,* in which they could discern the ensigns of Jehan Shah, and rajepoot horsemen hovering about it. In a moment the panic spread ;—all quitting the fray, rushed out to discover who this new enemy might be ;—saw the object of dread, and did not wait for more : they fled with precipitation ; and the gurhee, the scene and object of this bloody contest, remained in possession of the few surviving rajepoots. These were in all but thirteen persons, every one more or less wounded, who remained, out of near sixty choice men, who not an hour before had entered its walls. Of the Patans, it was roughly conjectured that better than one hundred men had fallen, besides the wounded.

* Grove of trees.

whom their companions had borne from the field.

" " The cloud of dust which had alarmed the Patans proceeded from the very convoy which the party of rajepoots had been sent out to protect ; and which was attended by a small body of troops under command of an officer from the camp of Jehan Shah. Observing the Patans retreating, but unwilling to weaken their own force by pursuing them, the commander sent a few horsemen to reconnoitre the place. They recognising the rajepoot dress, and the signals made by some of the survivors, came and found these thirteen men, sitting faint, weary, and steeped in blood, amid heaps of carcasses, and surrounding your father, who with his head resting on his hand, and his heavy sword lying across his lap, leant over the almost lifeless body of his friend Purtaub Sing.

" " Assistance was now obtained. The wounded, such, that is, as could be moved, were carefully carried off ; while the dead heaped together, with logs of wood cut from the neighbouring jungle, were decently burned ; and the party moving off, left the bloody gurhee and the dead Patans to the vultures and jackalls.

" " The events of this day, on which, from a fondness for the two principal actors in them, and perhaps an emotion of pride for my countrymen,

I may have dwelt too much at length, knit with more firmness than ever the ties which bound together the hearts of your father and Purtaub Sing; who gradually recovered of his wounds, and acknowledged, as well he might, that your father was the preserver of his life. They made a formal exchange of pugrees* (turbans) as brothers; and to bind the alliance as closely as possible, they entered into a compact, that so soon as the one should have a son and the other a daughter of fitting years, an intermarriage should take place. In process of time each settled himself at his own thakoorae (or lordship); and although the distance of their respective places of residence forbade so constant a personal intercourse as formerly, their friendship existed undiminished, and evinced itself in an affectionate interchange of messages and presents; in which the contemplated alliance was always mentioned as an event anticipated by both with equal earnestness.

“ Years rolled on; your father, after losing more than one child, was blessed by the birth of yourself, my son; a healthy boy, whose well-formed limbs and robust frame betokened long life, although your horoscope, for I was one of those consulted upon that event, was clouded with mystery and auguries of dubious import. In time

* A common custom among the natives of India.

also it pleased Providence to grant to Purtaub Sing two sons and a daughter, the latter of which was looked upon as the destined bride of one of your father's youths, when they should have advanced sufficiently in years; nay, the ceremony of betrothment was only prevented from time to time by the successive decease of your elder brothers.

" ' It happened one day, as Purtaub Sing was returning home from hunting, unsuccessful and fatigued, and therefore perhaps in worse than ordinary humour, that in passing some ruined dewuls,* sacred to the blessed and powerful Bhowanee, a figure started up from among them so suddenly, and with so loud an outcry for charity, that the thakoor's horse was startled, reared, and almost threw its rider. It was an old and withered fakir, whose eyeballs were turned inwards until the white alone was visible, and whose arm was rigidly fixed above his head. His load of matted hair, saturated with filth and ashes, hung down over his shrunken shoulders, and the only garment he had on was an orange-coloured rag about his loins.

" ' This old jogee † hearing the party passing, and doubtless aware that it must be the sowarree (train) of some man of consequence, continued

* Dewul is a temple.

† A caste of Hindoo religious mendicants.

his clamour, bellowing out for charity, in the name of *Devee*,* the goddess of the place. ‘The curse of Devee herself be upon thee, thou old blind vagabond!’ exclaimed the thakoor, enraged at the discomfiting consequences of the old man’s appearance, which had almost unhorsed and disgraced him in the eyes of his followers. ‘What old dog art thou to sit there startling the horses of passengers with thy yells and thy ugliness? Hence!—get thee gone, lest thou meetest with punishment in place of alms.’

“‘The curse of Devee will surely fall,’ replied the old jogee, after a moment’s pause and in a solemn voice; ‘but it will be on thyself, thou proud and hardened man, who darest to insult the goddess by calling down her wrath upon her innocent and faithful votary. I go, but thou shalt often wish me back before thou seest me again!’

“‘The thakoor, confounded by the old man’s denunciation, which, he has often since declared, smote him like a blast of cold pestilential vapour, paused for a while in astonishment and almost in dismay. He then recovering himself, called upon his servants to bring the old fakeer before him by any means they could devise; but the jogee had disappeared so soon as he had concluded his commination; and although they made strict and

* Another name for Cali or Bhowanee.

instant search for him, he was nowhere to be found.

" " This singular occurrence made a deep impression upon Purtaub Sing, and weighed heavily upon his spirits. Solicitous to avert the wrath of the terrible goddess, under which he had reason to believe he had fallen, he distributed large alms; and making a pilgrimage to a shrine of some sanctity in the neighbourhood, he distributed large donations to the brahmins of that place.

" " A year elapsed without the occurrence of any severe misfortune, and he was beginning to indulge a hope that the wrath of Devee had in truth been averted. One day an uproar in the court of his mansion having attracted his notice, he sent to learn what had occasioned it; but his consternation and horror may be imagined, when he found that while his two boys were playing together among the flower plots in the court, a large covra-capella, gliding from a bush of jasmine, had coiled itself about the eldest, a lovely and promising child, and bit him in the neck. The cries of the children drew the attendants to the spot; and they, on being questioned, declared it as their opinion that the other boy would have met a similar fate in spite of their exertions, had not a neel-canthal, or jay, of immense size, flown from a neighbouring tree, and attacking the serpent, forced him to quit his prey. The reptile

gliding over the ground, took refuge in a hole, which they then for the first time perceived under an old image of Devee.

“ ‘ This conclusive evidence, as it appeared, of the unmitigated wrath of the goddess, alarmed the thakoor as much as the loss of his son distressed him. Again he held consultations with the most learned brahmins, who, when made acquainted with the circumstance, agreed that the goddess was not yet appeased; but did not consider the case of the thakoor as hopeless. They gave it as their opinion that larger gifts and still longer pilgrimages were doubtless expedient, but that such, judiciously disposed of and duly performed would as certainly prove availing; and declared it manifest that the interference of the neel-canth denoted the influence of some powerful agency in favour of his family.

“ ‘ In compliance with this advice the terrified Purtaub Sing taxed his means to the utmost to build and endow a temple to Calee at Bindrabund, whither he repaired a devout pilgrim. But his mortification and despair was overpowering when, upon his return home, he learned that his second son had disappeared, stolen it was apprehended by some wandering jogees; and that his daughter, having unhappily received the infection of that fell disease the small-pox, had died only a week before the father’s arrival.

“ ‘The number and severity of these blows overwhelmed the unfortunate thakoor: he tore his beard; threw dust upon his head; and refusing every sort of comfort, shut himself up in a small room of his palace to weep and fast.

“ ‘While he sat thus in deep mourning, and musing over his childless condition, under the absorbing influence of grief and of an opium pill, which was the only sustenance he would receive, the figure of the old fakeer whom he had so grossly offended appeared before him just as he had seen him at the ruined temple. ‘Grief,’ said the old man solemnly, ‘softens the hardened soul, as the western breezes melt the snow of Hindoo-Coosh; but long pilgrimages are in vain, —rich offerings are dross. If ye would regain a lost treasure, sacrifice to the power ye have offended the dearest object you possess. Repair then to the sacred lake of Pokhur: * let your alms be spread upon the shrine of Mahadeo Aitemateswar. Let her who delights in the chaplet of skulls be propitiated with blood; the God of life and death will provide his own oblation: the neel-canth alone can struggle with the serpent.’

“ ‘The figure of the jogee then retreated, or disappeared; for the thakoor, on recovering from the swoon in which his attendants found him, could

* A small lake or tank near Ajmere.

give no distinct account of the manner in which he either came or went. But the effect of the vision, if a vision it were, was immediate and salutary on the thakoor's mind ; for he rose immediately, performed his ablutions, dressed himself, and was repairing to the apartments of his women, when it was intimated to him that his wife, who was near her confinement at the time of his return, had just then been delivered of a daughter.

" "His heart leaped within him at these tidings, for it was like an assurance that the effects of the fakeer's prediction were passing from him ; but in another moment that joyful emotion was checked by a chill of horror ; for he felt that this very daughter would now to him be his dearest object, and that by the voice of the vision it was pre-condemned to be sacrificed to Devee.

" "A third time did he call around him the wisest brahmans and most learned pundits ; but it was in vain : they could give him no consolation. The words of the old fakeer were too clear to afford a double meaning. The command was too decided to be explained away by any casuistry. If the new-born infant were in truth his dearest possession,—and what else could now be so dear to the bereaved father ?—then he must sacrifice it to the bloody goddess. He sat in moody silence, which none of the assembly for a long time dared to interrupt. At last arose a hoary brahmin, whose

half-extinguished eye bespoke a heart dead to human feelings. ‘ Listen, Thakoor-jee,’ said he, ‘ to the words of one who has no object to gain either by falsehood or by flattery. The voice which spoke in the semblance of that old fakeer is one which may not be withheld: the goddess must and will have her own; and better that thou shouldst give than she should take. The ‘ lost treasure’ can only be thy lost son; and the sacrifice of an infant to whom thy heart cannot have as yet clung is a cheap purchase for the restoration of a son to thy bosom and prosperity to thy failing house. In a month from this time is held the great annual melah (or fair) at Prayag,* thither repair, thou and thy wife, with this infant. In that auspicious spot, where the three sacred streams unite their waters, do thou by the hands of the officiating priest plunge in thy infant: by this shall the goddess be appeased, and the friendly powers which attend thy house have free scope to exert their influences.’

“ ‘ Harsh as was this advice, who could gainsay its soundness? The struggle in the breast of the thakoor was severe; but the hope of again beholding his son, and the earnest desire of breaking, upon any terms, the spell which hung over his house, at last fixed his fluctuating resolution. The mother, tutored by the attendant brahmans,

* Allahabad, at the junction of the rivers Ganges and Jumna.

and commanded by her lord, with distracted heart and streaming eyes, accompanied the innocent being to which she had given birth only, as it seemed, to feed the voracious alligators of the Gunga, the chosen instruments of the wrath of Calee.

" " When the thakoor and his party reached Prayag, the assemblage of persons brought together by the melah was already prodigious. Pilgrims were there from every quarter of Hindostan ; merchants and dealers from all the East ; devotees and fakirs of all classes in thousands ; and a miscellaneous crowd of every sort and denomination, of men, women, and children, were thickly thronged together upon the banks of both the Ganges and Jumna.

" " The plain which terminates the Doab at the confluence of these two stately rivers was covered for several cos with the encampments of those whom motives of religion, of profit, or amusement had brought to this celebrated festival. Thousands of white tents and semianehs glittered over the plain, and tens of thousands of conveyances, hackeries, rhuts, and garees, with elephants, camels, horses, yaboos, asses, bullocks, and buffaloes, and every other sort and species of burden-bearing animal, flitted in all directions over its surface, giving to the ground they covered a look of teeming life and bustle, which dazzled the eye, while the hum

and buzz which arose from it, astounded and perplexed the ear. The stern and venerable fortress reared its grey walls 'above all, overlooking and commanding every part of the varied scene.

"The day after their arrival was the first of religious ablution and purgation. Thousands of pilgrims thronged the ghauts, awaiting the appointed moment for immersion in the sacred stream, which carries with it the blessing of three holy ablutions;* and so eager were they all to enjoy the earliest influence of this blessed lustration, that many were maimed, and some even lost their lives in the struggling of that overwhelming crowd.

"But many of the pilgrims came to this venerable place, not for purposes connected with the continuance of their mortal career, but expressly with the intention of terminating it; and that, not like the innocent daughter of Purtaub Sing, unconsciously compelled to a terrible fate; but voluntarily to exchange a life in this world for the joys of another existence. These persons, dressed in robes stained with the sacred yellow, and crowned with chaplets formed of the jasmine and chumpa blossoms, advanced with firm steps and cheerful countenances to the margin of the river, and accompanied by the holy brahmins, whose business

* An invisible sacred stream, the Saraswatee, is supposed to join the Jumna and Ganges, underground, at Prayag.

it is to officiate with such truly pious Hindoos; performed the prescribed rites of prayer and worship. There, embarking in boats appointed for the purpose, and being rowed to the point where the three streams unite, they gently sunk from the earth to awaken in the full fruition of joy in the regions of bliss.

“‘Others there were who from motives of exalted piety, or in consequence of vows made in moments of danger or distress, had pledged themselves, or others, as sacrifices to the avenging powers of Heaven. Among these were numbered the unfortunate Purtaub Sing and his more unhappy wife.

“‘The heart of the luckless thakoor burned within him as the period for his painful sacrifice drew nigh; and convulsive sobs issued from the covered rhut which concealed the mother and her child: but the soul of the rajepoot, the piety of the Hindoo, rose above the parent’s weakness. He walked steadily to the rhut; and receiving his infant daughter, placed it in the arms of the officiating brahmin. A half-stifled shriek was heard from the rhut. ‘My daughter! my daughter!’ exclaimed a voice in piercing accents:—ah! pitiless Calee, thou hast left me childless!’ It ceased: the infant was borne away to the fatal point; and the father turned away his eyes.

“‘Advancing into the stream the brahmin took the little creature, which turned as he thought its

full dark eyes upon his face, with an expression of resignation that moved even his stern and unbending nature; nevertheless, he launched it into the stream, and watched the unfailing appearance of the alligator which should engulf it in his maw. Up came the monster, surging the water as he rose; but no sooner had he approached the floating infant than the bright gleaming feathers of a neel-canthal were seen hovering about it; and the grim creature instead of opening his terrible jaws to swallow his prey, glided swiftly past it, forming an eddy in his course, which wafted the child back towards the boat from it which had just been thrown.

"Astonished at the incident, but inattentive to its cause, the brahmin again launched the devoted infant into the stream. Again the monster rose; but, baffled by the influence of the brilliant blue-necked bird,* again it wafted its intended prey back to the grasp of the sacrificing priest. A third time did he dash it into the stream; and a third time witnessed the same prodigy. 'Horror of horrors!' exclaimed he at last, insensible to aught but the seeming displeasure of the power he served, 'the goddess rejects the oblation:

* Neel-canthal means "blue-necked":—it is a name applied to Seeva or Mahadeo, from one of his many miraculous adventures, when, swallowing a serpent one day, it stuck in his throat, and the poison of the animal rendered it *blue*.

let those who have offered it tremble for their unforgiven sins; and let the victim be left to its fate!" With these words, and muttering a deprecatory prayer, he turned the boat and abandoned the unfortunate infant to the mercy of the current.

"' It happened that I was close by at the moment, paying a less revolting tribute to the less sanguinary god whom I serve. My wife and I, no longer young, though often longing for the blessing of children, were yet childless. The eddying stream swept the still floating infant close by my boat:—it seemed as if the voice of a heavenly messenger was urging me to save it; and although such an act is contrary to the usages of our religion, which you know brands persons so saved as outcasts, there was an appealing influence in the very peculiar circumstances of the scene which, joined to the remembrance of my wife's anxiety for a child, induced me to pick up the little wretch. Its pale countenance and half-closed eyes spoke to my very heart; and I vowed to save its life and bring it up as a daughter.

"' I had a latent hope that in the busy crowd around us, all interested in their own concerns, this act might have passed unnoticed; but such was not the case. The officiating brahmin himself remarked and remonstrated with me upon what he called my sacrilegious deed. In reply, I reminded him of the circumstances in the prodigy

which he had overlooked, and called upon him to explain them: this he confessed himself unable to do; but still he rejected the inferences which I had drawn, that it was not the will of Heaven that the child should perish. ‘Be persuaded,’ replied I, repeating my arguments: ‘this child is destined to live. It has not been rejected by the goddess; on the contrary, it is by her permission that it has been saved; and the crime would be in destroying or abandoning it, in defiance of her divine interference. But who are they that offered it? We see that it is of raje-poot parents. Let us inquire its history; the knowledge of that may assist our judgment.’

“‘He led me to the thakoor Purtaub Sing, with whom, by reputation, I was well acquainted. From him I learned all the circumstances of which I have now informed you, my dear son. The truth flashed at once upon me. ‘It is evident, oh, thakoor-jee! that the words of the vision are accomplished. The neel-canthal hath snatched the prey from the serpent. I, a priest of Mahadeo, have saved the victim which you, oh, thakoor! had offered as your most precious possession to the goddess of the hundred arms. If my words are doubtful, I propose the proof. I have here a buffalo; it has been a faithful servant, and hath borne hither the greater part of the poor brahmin’s baggage. But this and much more will I sacrifice

for the sake of the truth. Let the animal be thrown into the very spot from whence the infant was taken : if it be seized upon like other victims, then doth Calee proclaim herself satisfied, and this child remains the dedicated priestess of Mahadeo. If otherwise, I abandon the ill-fated innocent to its fate.'

"' This test was accepted, both by the officiating brahmin and by the thakoor, who was divided by his desire to save his child and his terror for the vengeance of Calee. The buffalo was carried to the spot and precipitated into the flashing waters. No sooner had it risen to the surface, and fairly got into the united streams, than an alligator of tremendous size arose like a huge serpent from the abyss, and seized the throat of the buffalo. The struggle was terrible but short ; the waters foamed like a boiling caldron, and the bellowing of the affrighted buffalo could be heard even above the thousand shouts of the multitude ; but after a few moments they both sunk, and all was still ; and the waters quickly regaining their dark and dangerous stillness, betrayed not a trace of the many living beings they had ingulfed that day.

"' It scarcely needs, my son, to tell you that the infant thus preserved is Soorayah, the maiden you have believed to be my daughter. As the child of Purtaub Sing, the friend and sworn

brother of your father, she might, nay, she should, have been your bride ; but as the vowed priestess of Mahadeo, she never can be the wife of man. Seek not, my son, to draw down ruin and misfortune upon your own head, and on the family of the thakoor, your father's friend, your uncle by love and adoption, by urging a suit which Heaven itself would blast, with misery, were man weak enough to permit it.

“ Of my story there remains but to say, that Purtaub Sing failed not to proceed as he had been directed to Pokhur, where his offerings and piety found so much favour with the mighty Mahadeo, that upon his return he found his missing son restored to him in the same mysterious way as that in which he had disappeared,—being found one morning in the court of his father's gurhee. But although in other respects a quick and intelligent child, the boy either could not or would not give any intelligible account of what had befallen him during his absence.’

“ Such, sir, was the brahmin's narrative, and you may imagine how deeply it affected me. The disorder of mind into which it threw me was such, in fact, as to incapacitate me from either acting or thinking in any rational way regarding my future conduct. But to renounce the hope of possessing Soorayah was an effort quite beyond my power.

“ The old man, compassionating my extreme

distress, continued to regard me for some time without speaking. ‘Come, my son,’ said he at length, ‘it is in vain to strive with destiny :—be a man ;—arouse yourself, and act the part of a virtuous and generous one. The mighty Mahadeo himself will support you under the painful sacrifice he requires, and provide you a fitting mate from amongst the fairest daughters of your tribe, who are free from the fatal vows which sever thee from her whom thy heart would have chosen. In the mean time you cannot fail of perceiving how necessary it is for you to quit this place and return to your father, who has been too long deprived of your society.’

“ What lover can brook the voice of reason when it urges a separation from his beloved ? The advice of my host sounded harsh and unfeeling in my ears ; and I could almost have hated the old man for pointing out so clearly the insuperable obstacles which existed to my union with Soorayah. But not even lovers can control circumstance and fate. My father, probably tutored by the old brahmin himself, urged my return to his presence in a tone of anxiety which I could not resist. My meetings with Soorayah were entirely interrupted. I never saw her ; and weary with the misery of disappointed hope, and of the altered aspect of the household in which I had once been so welcome and so happy, I resolved

on returning to my father, relating to him all the circumstances of Soorayah's fate, as well as my love for her ; and soliciting his influence with her father to break the unhappy vows which a superstitious scruple had imposed upon his daughter.

" My father received me with his wonted affection, and cheered me with hopes of removing the obstacles to my union with the daughter of his old friend ; for my father is by no means superstitious, and could not be brought to believe that so many presents, pilgrimages and penances could be insufficient to propitiate an offended deity, or to repair a broken vow. But Purtaub Sing had been too severe a sufferer under such offences to incur voluntarily a repetition of punishment. Although my father visited him on purpose, and was received by his adopted brother with the most affectionate attention ; and though the presents he offered were entirely calculated to attest the sincerity of the welcome he gave, still, when the subject of my union with his daughter was approached, the thakoor had but one reply :—' My daughter is no longer mine to bestow ;—offered to Bhowanee as an expiation of my crime, and rescued from her bloody altar by the agency of a more powerful deity only for the purpose of devoting her life to his service, *I have lost all title to the child* ; and may God forbid that I should again provoke

the wrath of an offended divinity to fall upon my family and name !'

"Alike in vain was every shape of application to the old brahmin, Gopaul Dos. He declared himself too well assured of the will of his god, and too much alarmed at the thought of exciting his displeasure, to risk such a consequence by open disobedience. The maiden, he said, was the dedicated spouse of Mahadeo, and could not be restored to the world without a distinct command from the god himself : 'and know,' added he, 'a fact which should influence a mind of any generosity, that should you persevere, and unhappily succeed in perpetrating the crime you meditate, its consequences will fall upon him who has been your sincere friend as well as host ; for the Great God himself has revealed to me that the event which gives Soorayah to your arms, will involve the destruction of her true father and her adopted parent, with his whole family.'

"Driven almost to desperation by such continued repulses, I lingered round the spot which held the idol of my heart, and suffered month after month to glide away in abortive attempts to procure a sight of, if not an interview with, my beloved Soorayah. Her guardians were too watchful to permit me to succeed in the last ; and it was only by constant perseverance that I even obtained a glimpse of her person, when mingling with the

other maidens in the duties of her office. Old Gopaul Dos himself was for ever on the watch ; and aware of my attempts, he not only signified by message the inutility of persevering in them, but on one occasion, having very unexpectedly given me the meeting, he conjured me in person to desist from what he called my criminal conduct, as otherwise he should be forced to deprive himself of the staff of his old age, by removing his adopted daughter from his house to a seclusion which should baffle my boldest attempts.

" His just upbraidings touched my soul, and I attempted to withdraw from a pursuit which could only succeed by the ruin of one to whom I was bound by many ties. The effort however was too much for me ; my health gave way under the extinction of hope ; and after suffering a severe illness, I continued to pine away in a manner which greatly alarmed my father. He broke out in abuse of his former comrade in arms, and the old brahmin, whom he denounced as selfish unfeeling fellows, who, for the sake of a silly superstitious scruple, would see a fine young man, the only support of an ancient family, pining to death before their faces. ' But might the curse of Calee herself seize upon him, if he would permit such a sin ! He would himself assist his son, and take upon his own old head the wrath of the destroyer, if his wrath was to be excited by a mere act of humanity

and virtue. But first, he would make one more attempt to bring the obdurate old brahmin to reason.'

"Accordingly he sent his most confidential servant in deputation to Gopaul Dos, to acquaint him with the danger of his son, and to try if it were possible to move him in his favour by an assurance that he, the thakoor, would assume all responsibility, and by prayer and offerings divert from the family of Purtaub Sing and Gopaul Dos the wrath which they dreaded from his god.

"To the surprise, no less than the satisfaction of us both, my father's application met with a reception by far more favourable than we could have anticipated. The old brahmin no longer spoke of my object as being totally inadmissible; he even held out hopes ; but besought our patience for awhile, and conjured me not to counteract any agency that might be operating in my favour, by an ill-judged measure of premature violence. Finally, he informed us that he, among others of his brethren, had received the orders of their master Jey Sing to repair without loss of time to Dehlee, in order to assist in certain operations connected with the great works which he was carrying on at that place by the emperor's desire ; as well as to be present at some solemn holidays to be observed in honour of Mahadeo, at a shrine not far from the city. Thither therefore he invited my father and

myself to join him ; for in that place he assured us that he had reason to expect the god would declare his will regarding the fate of his priestess Soorayah.

" We gathered that the alteration of the old brahmin's views on the subject had occurred in consequence of a dream or vision which he believed had been sent by Mahadeo himself, to signify the line of conduct which it was his pleasure should be adopted by his votary : but however that might be, we did not fail to comply with his suggestion.

" On arriving at Dehlee, we found that Gopaul Dos had taken up his abode in that extensive establishment attached to the temple of Mahadeo, of which you witnessed the destruction on that fearful night. It was secretly connected with, and not far distant from, the palace of the rajah himself; and was usually occupied by brahmins and votaries of Seevah, who all lived safe, and free from insult or outrage, beneath the shadow of the wise Jey Sing. To this temple I was permitted to repair for religious purposes, where glimpses of my mistress were not denied me ; nor was an occasional brief interview entirely unattainable. Our affairs, in fact, according to the whisperings of my sanguine spirit, were proceeding in a prosperous train, when the extraordinary tidings of your great monarch's approach began to be spoken of, and in a short space

the court was aroused from its dream of false security by the capture of Caubul and Peshawur.

“ Our master, Jey Sing, disgusted on many accounts with the proceedings of the weak emperor, and determined never to lend his countenance or support to a course of policy which he greatly condemned and despised, thought fit to withdraw from court; and prepared, should danger approach, to defend his own territories with his own sword; and further to act as circumstances should determine. Many of his thakoors, with the wise and holy brahmans of his durbar, returned along with him to Jeypore; but Gopaul Dos, desirous of passing in Dehlee the festival of the docerra, a period which he had reason to expect would be marked by some communication from his god, remained with his wife and adopted daughter in the munder of Mahadeo, together with many of its ministers, both male and female. I need not add, that neither my father nor myself were disposed to quit the city; and Purtaub Sing, the father of Soorayah, not the least anxious of the party, remained also to witness the result, and ascertain the fate of his child.

“ It would be tedious and vain to describe the alternations of doubt and apprehension which we, in common with all the inhabitants of this capital endured, as various and often contradictory reports of the progress of the Persian king poured

daily in upon us. But it was not until the issue of the fatal battle of Kurnaul became known that terror and dismay spread widely in the city. From thence many of those who could fly carried off their treasures, and fled to Alwur or Ambere, nay; even to the remoter strongholds of Tonk, Oodeypore, and Chitore ; but Gopaul Dos saw no cause in his poverty for alarm, and we remained along with him. The wholesome regulations adopted by your monarch on the first entry of his troops into the city increased our assurance of security : nor was it until the terrible night of the tenth of the moon that our apprehensions were again excited.

“ As the tumult of that night increased, the old brahmin gathered his flock together under shelter of the altar of the mighty God : thither also as a rallying point of safety did many women come, belonging to Hindoo families of rank, particularly of rajepoots : nay, even during the more appalling scene which followed, its gates were more than once opened to admit fugitives, driven by terror from their houses. Some few male relatives of these women were also admitted into the exterior suites of apartments, in the hope that their presence might serve as a protection in case of any desultory attack. But of these the greater part were seduced away to join the rioters at the time when the success of their first attempts had encouraged hopes of obtaining a more important

advantage over their invaders; so that few remained except such as duty or a superior interest bound to the spot. Among these were the old brahmin, Purtaub Sing, and myself, who, happy in the permission to remain and watch over the safety of Soorayah, thought little of consequences. On the contrary, when next day the cry of murder and violence poured consternation over the city, I exulted in the thought that if I could not live with her, I should at least die in her defence.

"As the day wore on, the probability of such a consummation became momently stronger. The shouts of the soldiers pursuing their victims came every instant to our ears: we could hear the mingled screams and prayers of these victims as they fell beneath the heavy blows, and grasped with frantic strength the weapons in their very bodies, lest they should be withdrawn to repeat the stroke. Time after time did the tumult approach, swelling as it came, till it reached the loudest pitch of uproar; then lessened as the whirlwind swept by, until hope revived again, to be chilled by the next passing storm of extermination.

"At length the sound of a more formidable body was heard approaching; and this time the tumult, instead of receding, swelled louder and louder around our walls, and became mingled with the clang of bars and hammers, with which they strove to burst open the gates. All hope of escape

was now at an end; for whither could our helpless women fly when their very sanctuary was thus attacked? The streets were full of fierce ruffians; and even if other dwellings could be reached, what security did these afford, when from the roofs of our own we could see those around us broken open and pillaged, and the flames of their conflagrations rising in every quarter of the city?

"The crisis had now arrived, which, terminating hope, reminds the Hindoo that his honour is to be preserved by the sacrifice of the dearest objects he possesses. The disgrace of permitting his women to fall into the hands of strangers and foes is more intolerable than death; and escape being impossible, death remained our sole resource. To sacrifice with our own hands the wives and daughters of our fondest affections became now imperiously necessary; and to perform this painful duty did the old brahmin and Purtaub Sing now address themselves. The few men of our party arming themselves, stood ready to defend the entrances after they should have been forced open, and protect the solemn preparations within; and in a few minutes the fuel of the place was heaped into a pile, increased by every combustible article within the walls.

"Mounted upon this altar did Gopaul Dos stand ready for his dreadful office. Several of the

women, impatient to be in safety from the horrors around them, or preferring that sudden mode of death, had recourse to plunging themselves into the well of the place. The rest, trembling more at the fate which must await them if living, than for the death which awaited them, flocked around the pile, and one after another ascending it, offered their throats or their bosoms to their friendly murderer. When the alarm was first given, full thirty fair and lovely females were clinging in despair around the altar of the god. Before twenty minutes had elapsed two-thirds of these lay weltering and gasping upon the pile that was to reduce them to ashes ; the rest had thrown themselves into the well, or sought a vain security in the darker recesses of the buildings. Fire was then applied to the dry wood, which blazing up, consumed the living and the dead together.

“ During this time the few rajepoots and myself fought as hard at the entrance, to disappoint the lustful and greedy hopes of our assailants, as if our object had been to possess ourselves of wealth and happiness. But one after another they were hewn to the ground, and their bodies went to swell the heap of slaughter within. I alone remained, when you, sir, came up ; and a very few moments more would have closed my share in the work, and opened the disputed entrance to a burning ruin tenanted by carcasses : and cold indeed

would have been my thanks to the man who at such a moment interposed between me and death, had not that same hand restored to me also the being which alone made life desirable."

The young Arjun lost no great time in discovering that the conditions of the response delivered by Mahadeo, and declared by the old brahmin himself, as those upon which Soorayah was to become his wife, had been literally fulfilled by the unhappy fate of Purtaub Sing and Gopaul Dos with his family, in the temple of that god. He even insisted that it had become more imperatively his duty to protect the maiden in the most effectual manner, when for his sake, as it were, she had been deprived of both a real and an adopted father. His own father, Doorjun Sing, solicitous only for his son's happiness, was easily brought to view the matter with the young man's eyes ; and, had it rested with them alone, the nuptials would have soon been solemnised.

But the surviving brahmans of Mahadeo, and they flocked in from every quarter after the danger was past, were not to be so easily persuaded to part with the young and lovely priestess. They made sundry cogent objections ; explained the response of Mahadeo after their own fashion and will, and threatened both the thakoor and his son with the fiercest vengeance of the destroyer if they

should but think of interfering with his dedicated votaress.

I was greatly too much interested in the young man's fate to remain long ignorant of the obstacles which priestly tyranny or rapacity, or whatever other vice it might be, had reared up to blast the happiness of this youthful couple. It moved my deepest indignation; and entering fully into their feelings, I determined to thwart the purpose of their malignant and hypocritical oppressors. To the favoured servant of a great monarch, enthroned in a conquered city, it was no difficult matter to carry such a point. A single interview with the principal brahmans, and a very concise process of reasoning, produced a most important change in their view of the oracular expressions: the conditions were declared to have been duly and completely fulfilled: the maiden was delivered up to Doorjun Sing, thakoor, with the blessing (how far sincere I shall not take upon me to determine) of the reverend and holy brahmans; and in a very short time the old thakoor, with his gallant young son and his lovely bride, quitted the proud capital of Hindostan for their own hereditary lordship, breathing blessings upon at least one Kuzzibash. And it is gratifying thus to record, that among all the blood and carnage, the ruined families, and the broken hearts, which the fatal

Persian invasion cost the fair land of India, one youthful pair at least owed their happiness to this bitter infliction. Alas ! these solitary smiles, like the faint gleam of the rainbow fading away in the storm, were swallowed up in oceans of bitter tears.

CHAPTER XVI.

RESULT OF A GREAT ENTERPRISE.

As the fiercest storms are followed by the deepest calms, so the hurricane of desolation which had swept over the city, subsided into an awful stillness, as if to enable the survivors to gaze upon the wreck and examine their losses ; and dismal indeed was the account. The king's command did indeed cause the carnage to cease, and stilled the tumult ; but it could not dry up the tears ; it could not alleviate the misery, nor terminate the scenes of human suffering and woe which that tremendous infliction, however unhappily expedient, had occasioned.

For some days, even the voice of lamentation was little heard ; for the sufferers, dreading lest their very existence should be known, smothered their anguish, and stifled their groans with fear and trembling. They at length ventured from their

hiding-places, and dared again to occupy the ruins of their habitations.

In the bazars and streets, and highways, the putrefying carcasses of the dead lay heaped for days and weeks, rendering them altogether impassable ; so that from this cause alone a cessation of business and all common intercourse must have taken place in the city, had not some measures been adopted for diminishing the nuisance. The surviving inhabitants were pressed wherever they could be found to assist the Persians in dragging away the bodies, which were piled in heaps of forty or fifty, and burned in the houses or streets where they lay, with the timber torn from the ruined dwellings. Such funeral piles arose thickly in all quarters of the city, indicating by their frequency and duration the great number of dead thus consumed.

Of the numerical amount of human beings who thus fell victims to the insane turbulence of their fellow-citizens, it is difficult to speak with any accuracy ; nor perhaps could it be possibly ascertained whilst the Persian army continued in Shah-jehanabad ; but the best informed persons with whom I conversed upon the subject assured me, that including those afterwards put to death in the Serai Rouh-allah Khan, and those, particularly women, who had murdered themselves, the whole number could not have amounted to less than an

hundred and fifty thousand souls.* Nor when we consider the enormous population of this great capital, the number of exasperated soldiers so unexpectedly let loose upon them, and the length of time for which the slaughter continued to rage, can this estimate be held extravagant.

* The number of victims to this terrible massacre has been variously estimated by different writers. Some have doubled the amount mentioned in the text; others have reduced it to 7000; and to this last estimate the distinguished author of our best Persian history inclines; although I cannot see upon what sufficient grounds.

Hanway, a contemporary, and one of the best historians of Nadir, states the number of slain at 110,000. Fraser, also a contemporary, writing from the journal of a very respectable native, who was present during the whole time, sets it down at not less than 120,000: and if we consider that Dehlee was at the height of population and luxury, if not of glory, the residence of the richest court in the world; when we call to mind that upon this population, probably little less than 7 or 800,000 souls, in a state of ferment, and all poured abroad in the streets; not less than 100,000 fierce exasperated soldiers were turned loose with a command to "kill and spare not;" when we know that this lasted uninterruptedly for seven hours, and that these soldiers followed their prey into the very houses, which they burned with multitudes in them, can we suppose that the number of victims was limited to 7000? Is not 100,000, or 150,000, a much more likely estimate? The death of 7000 would scarce have caused a sensation; and yet all writers agree that Dehlee, during that scene, was "a type of the day of judgment and wrath." If it be supposed that the population of Dehlee is overrated, let it be recollect that Calcutta, at this time, contains full 900,000 souls; and that Benares, Lucknow, and several other native cities, of far less importance than Dehlee was at that period, have a population of 5 to 700,000 souls each.

Of women, it was computed that not less than ten thousand threw themselves into wells, in order to avoid their ravishers: of this number but a very small portion were ever extricated alive: perhaps the fate of those who thus perished was less deplorable than that of the unhappy wretches who were spared by the fierce soldiers to become the subjects of a more disgusting cruelty. These ill-starred prisoners were after a few days restored by the royal order to liberty and to their families, if these existed, or would receive their lost polluted relatives. In truth, it was a heart-rending spectacle to see their bitter anguish and overwhelming self-abhorrence, as released from the grasp of their brutal captors, they slunk away silent and despairing, to find, as best they might, their bloody homes and deserted dwellings. But many, not enduring the very idea of meeting husbands, or brothers, or lovers, in their ruined plight, thought only of quickly hiding their misery in the tomb; and the dagger, or the well, or the burning pile, afforded them the means of quitting a life which their misfortune, not their fault, had rendered intolerable.

But although the frequency of painful and bloody scenes decreased gradually after the massacre, the sufferings of the ill-fated citizens of Dehlee were by no means at an end. No sooner had a degree of tranquillity and confidence been

restored, than the peishcush, or subsidy, which had been stipulated for as a ransom for the city and a compensation for the expenses of the Persian government, became a subject of immediate and most anxious consideration to all parties concerned. This peishcush had been fixed at twenty crores of rupees,* of which sum Saádut Khan, the late soubahdar of Oude, had agreed to pay two crores ; but his effects in Dehlee only produced thirty lacs ; the rest was to be made good by his successor, Sufder Jung, from the treasury of Oude. Nizam-ul-Moolk made a shift to produce a crore and a half in money and jewels ; and Kummer-u-Deen Khan, the vizier, made good a like amount. The royal treasury did not, upon examination, contain more than three crores of money ; and although, in some old and secret vaults containing treasure of former monarchs, which had remained sealed up and almost unknown for many years, there was found a very considerable sum, still the whole together did not amount to ten crores. The remainder had to be made up by the various omrahs around the throne, and from the merchants and other inhabitants, who were all to be assessed according to their ability.

The collection of this assessment became the

* Twenty-five millions sterling.

occasion of very great cruelty and harsh treatment to the whole people of the city ; a cruelty which was entirely unknown to his majesty, and which was in great measure to be attributed to the agency of his lieutenant Thahmaseb Khan Wukeel, a rough, unfeeling soldier, to whom was committed the chief charge of the collection, and who, in the performance of his duty, was more apt to consider the end, than to regard the means of accomplishing it.

Persons were appointed, under this officer and the chief omrahs of the court, to carry into effect the needful measures, and to collect from various individuals the sums for which they stood engaged according to lists made out for the purpose ; but not only were these respective assessments often most unequally allotted, but the burden became still more intolerable from the rapacity of the deputy collectors, who were sure to levy upon various pretences all they could by any means extort, accounting with their employers not for one half of what they actually received. Besides, when money was not forthcoming, jewels or other property was taken instead, but put down at half; ay, often a third or fifth of its value ; so that the assessment was raised precisely in that ratio. A horse worth five hundred rupees was rated at one hundred ; a shawl worth fifty rupees was set down as worth but fifteen ; and at this valuation

it was received for the shah ; or if sold, as the only purchasers were to be found among the Persian soldiers, the owner in nowise benefited. It was reckoned, in fine, by the Hindoos with whom I conversed, that fully three times as much real value was taken in this way as ever found its way into the royal treasury ; and strange as it may appear, the rapacious vultures who thus gorged themselves upon the vitals of this unfortunate people, were themselves, many of them at least, inhabitants of the very city which they were pillaging.

The impossibility of satisfying these double demands made the collection proceed but slowly ; and Nadir, who probably saw good reason for wishing to shorten his stay, began to be impatient, and to urge his officers to greater diligence. It was then that scenes of severity and suffering recommenced in earnest ; and the persecuted inhabitants were thrown back into despair. A number of the inferior omrahs, and the dewans, or secretaries and treasurers of those of higher station, were arrested and beaten, or tortured in various ways, to extort discoveries of hidden treasure. Respectable men were disgraced remorselessly ; and the consequence was, that many, unable to survive the indignity, put an end to their own lives. Khalick Yar Khan, a relative of the vizier, stabbed himself from this cause. Rajah Mujlis

Ram, the dewan of the vizier Kummer-u-Deen Khan, being sent for by Thahmaseb Khan to account for some collections which he had been directed to make, the general being dissatisfied with his replies, ordered one of the furoshes in attendance to cut off one of his ears. His master, shocked at so gross and cruel an affront to his confidential officer, entreated the general to remit the punishment. "Friend Khan," replied the surly Thahmaseb, "best look to yourself, and let me and my duty alone : it may be your own turn next." The vizier, one of the principal omrahs of the empire, dared no further interference. The mutilation went on; and the high-caste Hindoo, unable to survive his disgrace, finished the tragedy by his own dagger.

The catastrophe of Rajah Chukl Kishore, a Hindoo of still higher rank, and vakeel, or envoy and agent for Sujaat Khan, soubahdar of Bengal, was even yet more painful. He was ordered to produce, on the part of his master, seven crores of rupees, as the portion of peishcush assessed on that government; and surprised alike out of his patience and his prudence, by a demand which he felt altogether unreasonable, he exclaimed indignantly, that "they must suppose the very earth of Bengal to be made of silver and gold ; that such a sum would require a train of waggons as long as from Bengal to Dehlee!" It was an unfor-

tunate sally ; for those with whom he was dealing made no allowance for indignant feeling, and enraged at so much freedom, gave orders for his being immediately beaten with sticks, and otherwise insulted. They, however, defeated their own ends by their unsparing cruelty; for the Hindoo, not only mortally affronted, but foreseeing only a repetition of unavoidable tortures, returned to his home, and instantly assembling his whole family, administered to them a dose of poison, of which he himself partook ; so that when next the officers came to demand his attendance they found only the ashes of the pile which had consumed their victim and all his household, along with the property of which he had been possessed,

A similar outrage, attended by similar consequences, swept from the earth the whole family of Bissonaut Roy, the darogha of pensions, and several other Hindoos of rank. A very general feeling of indignation was excited at the treatment of the venerable cauzee-ul-kuzzaut, or chief judge ; who, on some frivolous pretence, was insulted by stripes. But it would be endless, as well as disgusting, to enumerate the instances of cruelty and severity which occurred at this time, or the tragic scenes with which they often terminated.*

* The writers of that day describe the condition of Dehlee at this time to have " afforded an apt type of the day of wrath and judgment at the end of the world."

Hundreds, nay thousands, were tortured and mutilated ; until, weary of their lives, they put themselves to death, or provoked their tormentors to end them : and so utterly broken was the spirit of the people, that if but a single one of the horsemen employed by the collectors in these duties appeared among a thousand of the miserable Hindoos, not the smallest opposition was offered to his proceedings, however wanton or severe they might be.

It is but due to the character and justice of his majesty to declare, that the greater part of this cruelty was exercised without his knowledge ; for, deeply engaged in expediting business of importance to both empires, he could not give his usual attention to details. But when it did come to his ears that some of the more respectable inhabitants and even of the lesser omrahs had destroyed themselves in consequence of the excessive exactions of his officers, he not only reprimanded, and even punished the rapacious collectors, but remitted more than twenty lacs of rupees to persons whose circumstances did not admit of their paying the full appointed assessment.

It is time to turn to less revolting and more cheerful scenes ; and such were not wanting in this dissipated and thoughtless capital, notwithstanding the misery with which it teemed. On

the 21st day of March the Persian sentinels at the palace and gates were by the orders of his majesty removed, and replaced by the emperor's troops and guards, in sign of the friendly arrangement which had taken place between the monarchs ; and festivals were given and received, and splendid entertainments, in the most approved style of Indian luxury, succeeded each other in quick succession; mimicks, buffoons, and dancing women were never more in request.

On the 24th of March a still more sumptuous display of pomp and gaiety commenced, in the preparations for marriage between Nasseri-Oollah Meerza, the second son of his majesty, with Kudrul Nissa Begum, the daughter of Yezid Buksh, and great-grand-daughter of the deservedly celebrated Aurungzebe. On an occasion so august and so intimately connected with the good understanding of the two crowns, it was natural that not only the royal monarchs interested, but all their faithful servants should make the greatest exertions to evince their joy and satisfaction ; and accordingly the whole banks of the Jumna blazed like a firmament of suns for three successive nights with splendid illuminations. The most sumptuous feasts were given ; alms were distributed ; khelats were given on all hands ; and on the night of the 27th in particular, being that on which the marriage took place, the whole city rang with acclama-

mations, which drowned the shrieks and groans of those who were suffering under the severe inflictions that have been described.

It is said that while the marriage contract was preparing, a mistake occurred which, with a monarch of less enlarged and exalted mind than Nadir, might have tended to unsettle the amity which had been so recently established. The mootsuddies* appointed for drawing up the needful form of contract were stupid or impertinent enough to require, not only the titles of the king of kings, but a list of the generations of his family for seven generations back ; alleging that, in compliance with undeviating custom, on occasion of marriages in the royal family, it was necessary to insert so much of the genealogy of the bridegroom in the contract. His majesty, however, when informed of this absurd requisition, instead of evincing any displeasure, with that contempt of petty insults which characterises a great mind, coldly desired that they should by all means comply with so proper a custom, and might designate him, "Nadir, son of the sword — son of the sword," &c., to seventy generations if they pleased. It is unnecessary to say that no more questions were asked about the matter.

* Writers ; secretaries.

Yet notwithstanding all the attractions of a luxurious capital, such is the restless disposition of the human breast, that the Persians, accustomed to rapid change of scene and great activity of life, began to be satiated with dissipation and pleasure as they had been with blood and plunder, and to weary of their stationary condition. They felt too that they were far from home, and among those who, should any reverse of fortune occur, would not fail to wreak a dreadful vengeance upon those who had laid so heavy a hand on them. Nor were there lacking some who felt also a national longing to revisit those homes and those relatives which they had not beheld for many years, and to enjoy among them the wealth they had earned with so much toil. Thus the wish of both the conquerors and the conquered was the same, although their objects in desiring it were different; for the latter longed as earnestly to get rid of their oppressors as the former did to revisit their homes or to seek for fresh adventures.

While things were in this situation, the earnest desire of the Persians to depart was increased to a pitch which would soon have proved uncontrollable, by an incident, doubtless the effect of design, although it might not be easy to determine to which of the parties the conception was due. A grand entertainment was given by his majesty to the whole court of Dehlee, as well as to his own

officers and servants, at which a multitude of both nations were present. It was held in the dewan-e-aum, as affording large accommodation, and the place was splendidly fitted up for the occasion; the whole court being covered in with semianehs of crimson silk, and lighted up with a thousand silver lamps, which burned with fragrant oil.

The scene was dazzling and brilliant beyond description; nor was there any luxury or amusement which this luxurious capital could produce wanting to complete its attractions. The completest bands of musicians, the first-rate mimicks, jugglers, rope-dancers, wrestlers, and performers of feats of every description, were all in attendance to display their various powers. The best and most accomplished dancers exerted their most graceful and voluptuous movements to please the eye, and the sweetest and most powerful singers that Hindostan could produce fascinated the ear, and wrapt the senses in delight.

Many were the plaintive or spirit-stirring strains which these nightingale-voiced minstrels poured forth, to soothe the lover's anguish, or to rouse the soul of the brave. Many a touching lay, clothing with fresh sweetness the glowing thoughts of our immortal Hafiz, awoke in the hearts of the Persians the memory of their own incomparable land — of the fair plains of Sheerauz, and its “matchless borders!”—and many were the “shah-

bash's" and "barekillah's" which were elicited from the mouths of their delighted auditors. And not few were the ashurfees* and tomauns—ay, and jewels from the finger or the girdle, which showering into the lap of the sweet minstrel, testified the delight of princes, khans, and omrahs.

It was while their hearts were still open, and their roused affections still glowing, that, clad in the simple unpretending garb of the tribes of Iraun, a light and lovely half-vailed female floated into the assembly, and striking a few notes upon a sitarah which hung from her neck, poured forth in the pure language of the land she represented, a strain so sweet, so liquid, that every soul was enraptured,—every ear enchanted.—“Again,” it said, “again, let me behold my native vale!—again doth my soul long for the breezes which fan its meadows!”—and thus, in poetry as touching as the music was plaintive, did it continue, recalling every image which binds the heart of man to the land in which his infancy has passed. The effect was like magic. A murmur of delight arose in the thronged assembly, and swelled to an expression of enthusiasm, which even the profound respect due to the presence could not restrain: even Nadir himself seemed moved, and signified his wish to reward the songstress; but she was no longer to be found. No sooner had the assembly

* Gold mohrs, a coin worth nearly two pounds sterling.

acknowledged her power by the emotion it produced, than she vanished in the crowd like a dream of the night, or like one of those sweet but fleeting associations her strains had awakened.

But though minstrel and strain had fled their effects were less transitory. From the assembly of nobles they flew like wild-fire through attendants and troops. The form of the songstress was described, and her lay repeated, or reported from mouth to mouth, until the first was exalted into a houri of heavenly loveliness, and the latter into an angel's song; a holy message. The sensation increased in a like ratio, and "Iraun! fair happy Iraun!" was the cry among all ranks. And, whether Nadir had in reality any previous knowledge of the occurrence, or whether being in no wise averse to such a feeling in his army, he thought fit to make a merit of gratifying their wishes, it might be hard to determine; but that very night were issued the first orders connected with a retrograde movement; and next morning the advance of the army had its head pointed to the north-west. Lootf Allee Khan with 12,000 men was sent to Shalimar in charge of the baggage and treasure; all of which had been prepared for such a movement; and from that time preparations for our final departure proceeded with determined alacrity.

A few days previous to this event the padshah

invited his late conqueror, now his firm friend, to partake of a sumptuous entertainment; at which, to enhance the honour intended to his illustrious guest, each of the chief omrahs and officers of the empire were appointed by the emperor to fill the situations of ordinary domestics, and perform respectively, some office discharged by these. Thus, one was to present the paun-dan,* another the uttr-dan,† a third was to hold the basin, a fourth the water-ewer, a fifth to present the sherbet, a sixth the hookah, and so on. The feast was worthy of the giver; and the most gracious and pleasing cordiality reigned throughout the whole. Nadir, upon this occasion, saw fit to tender to his imperial host certain valuable advice, calculated to maintain the good understanding between the states; and the emperor, as was most fitting, received it in good part.

When the proper time came for handing coffee to the royal guests, it was brought by Ameer Khan, umdut-ul-moolk, to whom this duty had been appointed, and who was about to present it in the usual form; when a sudden scruple seized him,—to which of the two monarchs should he first present the cup? Custom and etiquette required that his own master, the emperor of Hindostan, should first receive it; but in that case the khan would run the risk of affronting, and ex-

* The box containing betel. † The vessel containing uttr of roses.

asperating a conqueror whom he dreaded, and whose resentment might be fatal both to his master and himself. On the other hand, to neglect his duty so far as to present it to any other than his imperial master and liege lord, might be jealously interpreted into a lack of zeal and regard, which might, at an after period, be turned to his disadvantage.

In this dilemma, a thought struck the khan. Pouring forth the coffee, and advancing as if he would have presented the cup to Nadir, he stopped short like one that checks himself in a mistake, then tendering it upon his knee to the padshah, "Let an emperor," said he, "perform the honours of his house to a 'king of kings.' Your servant is too mean for so exalted an office."* The elegance of his address, and the neatness of his expedient, delighted both monarchs. "Barekillah! friend khan!" exclaimed Nadir, "thou art a choice genius; thou hast truly hit the mark in the centre, and done thy duty well." And his master, the emperor, not less pleased, united with the shah in his encomiums on a conduct which gratified both Persians and Indians.

On the fourth day of May the greater part of the army, with the shah's peishkhaneh,† quitted

* The point of this very elegant saying is greatly lost in the translation.

† That part of the royal establishment sent always in advance.

Shahjehanabad for Shalimar. And that same day a drum was sent through the whole city to warn the inhabitants against harbouring any of the troops who might be disposed to desert their duty, and remain behind. Proclamation was at the same time made both throughout the army and the city, that no individual should be permitted to carry away with them any captive, male or female, upon any pretext, unless it were slaves regularly purchased, and accompanied by a bill of sale properly attested, declaring the seller to be satisfied. This prohibition even extended to women regularly married ; and none such, nor any female slave, was suffered to be taken away from Dehlee, unless by their own free consent ; and the penalty, being no less than forfeiture of life and goods, operated so powerfully upon many, that they dismissed even those women who might have been prevailed upon to remain. Some there were, indeed, among the superior officers, who thought fit to make use of very gentle restraint to prevail upon a favourite female to accompany them ; but the fact having reached the king's ears, after a march or two, they were all ordered to be sent back ; and severe as many esteemed this order, no one dared to dispute it.

On the 5th of May, the shah and all who had remained with him, bade a final adieu to the capital of Hindostan ; loaded with the spoil of a plundered empire, and leaving behind us a name

which that country will long remember. Her losses may be summed up in two sentences ; but they are pithy and portentous ones. Of sons and daughters she had to mourn full two hundred thousand who fell victims to fire, sword, and famine. Of treasure and of property, near one hundred crores* of rupees were torn from her king, her nobles, and her people, or destroyed by a reckless soldiery. Of this almost incalculable sum, it was estimated that more than two-thirds enriched the royal treasury ; that the plunder of individuals amounted to ten crores more ; and that the rest, while of use to no one, was lost to India, by fire, by the destruction of crop and stock, by fields laid waste, and loss of revenue to the crown. Assuredly, could a value be put on towns and villages destroyed, the amount would be still more swelled.†

* One hundred and twenty-five millions sterling.

† The following abstract of plunder which came into Nadir's treasury, is taken from a contemporary historian :

	<i>Crcores.</i>
Money coined in gold and silver	25
Jewels taken from the emperor and omrahs	25
Jewelled weapons and utensils, together with the peacock and other thrones	9
Gold and silver plate melted down	5
Furniture, rich stuffs, and other commodities	5
Warlike weapons, cannon, &c.	1
	70

Or about £87,500,000 sterling.

Besides which he carried off 1000 elephants, 7000 horses, 10,000 camels, with a crowd of eunuchs, writers, and artificers of all sorts.

Such was the termination of an enterprise which, in some respects at least, has probably few parallels in the history of the world. Other conquerors may have made a more bloody and desolating, or a more permanent impression on the devoted region of Hindostan ; but where is there one, who with means proportionally small, and surrounded by so many enemies at home, has ever struck so swift, so sure a blow, or carried off so rich a spoil ? His course, like that of the thunderbolt, was rapid, resistless ; yet moderate in success, as daring in execution, he sought not to retain conquest, but generously restored the sceptre to the very hands from which he had wrested it with so much facility.

As for the effeminate and luxurious people whom we had so sternly visited, it will scarce be credited, yet true it is, as strange, that, fearful as were the scenes they witnessed, and terrible as had been their sufferings, no sooner were the backs of their invaders turned than they appeared to forget all the evil that had passed, and turning lightly but eagerly to their former routine of pleasure, amused themselves with mimicking the bloody and horrible atrocities of which they had so lately been the victims, and the most revolting peculiarities which they had observed in the worst of our soldiers ! Nay, to such a height did many of these heartless and besotted creatures carry

